

**MAPPING THE SISYPHEAN ARCHIVES:
ARCHIVAL/ANARCHIVAL PERFORMATIVITY OF
REPETITION AND FAILURE
IN CONTEMPORARY ARCHIVAL ART**

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DECLARATION

I declare that all work presented in this thesis is my own.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored rectangular background. The signature reads "Gaem Ji" in a cursive, flowing script.

January 2017

ABSTRACT

Exploring a distinctive archival turn in art, this study investigates where the archival impulse comes from and why and how artists, as performative researchers, are obsessed with issues relating to the archive. In order to answer for these questions, this thesis displays a dynamic geography of archival/anarchival performativity in contemporary archival art since, primarily, the 1960s. The artist as Sisyphus detects the aporia of the archival impulse being simultaneously archival and anarchival and activates a Sisyphean loop of repetition and failure in their own artistic archives. Inspired by the myth of Sisyphus, this project is therefore given the title “mapping the Sisyphean archives”. Using a methodology of mapping, diverse case studies of archival art are interwoven to unveil the reconfiguration of the physical and conceptual conditions of the archive.

The meaning of mapping here is varied – doing, undoing, performing, failing, and queering, polymorphously facilitated by two key wheels of Sisyphean performativity. A critical capacity of repetition and failure is thus crucially credited as it brings resistant and alternative modes of being, thinking, and knowing to undermine any idealisation and totalitarianism embedded in normative archives. Referring to Jacques Derrida’s deconstructive reading of the archive and Gilles Deleuze’s thoughts on rhizomatic creativity, the first half of the thesis examines multifaceted aspects of repetition as being pathological, self-evolving, creative, and differentiated each time. In the second half, with reference to Aaron Williamson’s performance, *The Collapsing Lecture*, staging the idea of failure, polyphonic potentiality of failure is addressed as a particular attitude of Sisyphean artists to experiment with unusual, irregular, fallible, and purposeless yet permissive, rebellious, and emancipatory rhythms from within the archive.

Such a destructive yet generative force of Sisyphean performativity ultimately contributes to subverting the negative connotation of repetition and failure against the ideas of banal sameness and of success. Above all, a performative and processual multiplicity that Sisyphean archival art maps out demonstrates how any overdetermined social consensus and power inscribed in

archives can be dismantled and how the stagnant site of archives can be transformed into an imaginative, fluctuating platform for infinite future stories to come.

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INTRODUCTION

Jacques Derrida points out that “nothing is less clear than the word ‘archive’” these days.¹ Librarians and archivists are not the only communities that have wrestled with the concept of the word “archive” over the past decades. Between library and information sciences and various critical discourses across the humanities, interdisciplinary dialogues have been developed concerning the shared problems of taxonomy and its system that regulates the production, accumulation, and dissemination of knowledge and history. In particular, centred on the changing digital environment, a number of critical perspectives from philosophy, museology, literary theory, film theory, and postcolonial theory, have emerged to reconfigure and reshape the traditional ideas of libraries, archives, and technological-institutional forms of memory in both practical and theoretical ways.² There has also been a sense of urgency among artists and curators whose works and projects in turn raise questions concerning the remembering and forgetting of histories, archiving, rewriting the past, and researching through the archived memory and history. Contemporary artists in particular question the nature and function of archives, challenging the normative archival system, their taxonomies, and the overarching power of institutionalised archives.

This thesis asks the following questions which have emerged in recent years: What are the current artistic productions and aims of critique concerning the issue of archives intending to produce? Why are artists and curators obsessing over archivally driven research and objects now? Where does this archival impulse come from? Responding to these questions, the aim of this thesis is to explore the “archival/anarchival performativity of repetition and failure” in contemporary archival art practices since the 1960s, which I have named “mapping the Sisyphean archives”. I argue that mapping the Sisyphean archive is a critical tool, methodology, or even a fateful manner for artists to understand and approach the past, history, knowledge, and the world at large.

¹ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, translated by Eric Prenowitz, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 90.

² Sas Mays, ‘Introduction: Unpacking the Library’, in Sas Mays (ed.), *Libraries, Literatures and Archives*, Routledge, 2014, p. 2.

Before discussing what “mapping the Sisyphean archives” means, it is necessary to address the extent to which this thesis is concerned with the parameters of the archive, which differs from the parameters laid out by archival scientists. The term archive is often complex, ambiguous, and difficult to pin down in terms of its meaning and concept. I will begin by examining the dictionary definition of the term before going on to explore its confluent usages today, in Chapter 1. *Oxford Dictionaries* defines an archive as “a collection of historical documents or records providing information about a place, institution, or group of people” or “the place where historical documents or records are kept”.³ Here, an archive means both the content of documented records and a physical repository where the records are preserved. The term perhaps conjures images of temperature- and humidity-controlled rooms, packed with rows upon rows of folders and boxes, managed by a professional archivist in accordance with the principle of provenance. Strictly speaking, this thesis is not about the given traditional and conservative scope of the archive in an archival science sense but instead it deals with a range of archivally driven artworks that engage with the archive as “a loose signifier”. For contemporary artists creating such archive-related works, the archive is, in itself, both a critical vehicle and a conceptual medium for the production of work. Sometimes, these artists have a contradistinctive position of the typical archive made, used, or appreciated and rather actively denaturalise or deconstruct the concept and materiality of the archive. More specifically, this thesis is about a range of contemporary archival art that is simultaneously archival and anarchival, which often react against what archivology seeks or protects.

It may be useful to start with the grouping of different sub-tendencies of archivally driven art. Uriel Orlow identifies three groups of artists working with the idea of archives nowadays: archive makers, users, and thinkers.⁴ First, the works of “archive makers” simulate memory processes and build fictional, imaginary, or artistic archives by a way of collecting, accumulating, and classifying things and generating narratives. Next, “archive users” conduct

³ *Oxford Dictionaries Language Matter*, [Online] Available at: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/archive>, Last accessed 24 August 2015.

⁴ The grouping and description of three trends in archival art here are those given by Uriel Orlow. See Uriel Orlow, ‘Latent Archives, Roving Lens’, in Jane Connarty and Josephine Lanyon (eds.), *Ghosting: The Role of the Archive within Contemporary Artists’ Film and Video*, exhibition catalogue, Bristol: Picture This Moving Image, 2006a, pp. 34-35.

research on real archives, rejecting imaginary or symbolic archives, using documentary sources or found footage and challenging given interpretations of historical events and themes. Orlow specifically emphasises the significance of the last group, “archive thinkers”, whose practices are not centred on creating new archives or analysing existing ones but are more concerned with deconstructing or denaturalising the notion of the archive itself. While often simultaneously acting both as archive makers and archive users, archive thinkers tend to notice the latency of the archival material and meaning. They are aware that archives are constructed through a certain structure or system that symbolises authority and monumentality so that some parts of the archives are largely invisible, distant, or not immediately graspable.

In other words, all these types of artists – archive makers, users, and thinkers – tend to be free from any incumbent responsibilities and have more freedom to imagine and intervene in their creative process within the archive. Unlike archivists working in their archive, artists are typically less interested in protecting the integrity and authenticity of archival materials. Some of these artists have no interest whatever in guarding so-called historical truths or preserving objectivity, as historians engaging with archival materials might. Although they use historical narratives embedded in the archive for their works of art, their storytelling often blurs the border between fact and fabrication, and their interpretations of such historical records often subvert existing ones. They are also involved in shaking the stable and secure positions of institutional archives by exposing any error, chance, or irregularity they might encounter in the archive. Institutional curators, on the other hand, organise and utilise archival documents based on the institution’s policies and needs. Above all, artists detect the blind spots of the archival system both inside and outside institutions and embrace latent records in their own ways. General researchers using existing archives may read, study, work, and write for certain productive outcomes. However, artists do not always aim to produce a visible and finished product after they have navigated an archive. They rather take circuitous routes, voluntarily fail to complete given tasks, repeating actions to fill in archival gaps, create alternative archives of their own, and in general, simply grasp that which is absent. Such interventionist practices by archival artists can collide with the conservative principles and ethics that embody the

cataloguing and handling of archival materials. Nonetheless, the bold, transgressive activities of contemporary archival art will show how the processes of research can facilitate archival materials to work as an open space of imagination and can turn archives from historical documentation into a generative tool to open its interior and exterior world.⁵ In this sense, I wish that my mapping of the Sisyphean archives will act as a generative and critical tool to stimulate an interdisciplinary dialogue between archival science and contemporary art. I shall in particular browse artists' personal, alternative, counter, or pseudo archives, and investigate photographic, digital, mass media, imperial, and queer archives. My wish is also that the range of case studies of archival art examined in this thesis can encourage archival institutions and archivists to collaborate with artists in terms of dragging hidden materials out of shelves and broadening their intended user base. In short, this thesis attempts to turn the normative and stagnant nature of archives into an imaginative platform that can inspire researchers, curators, art historians, and archivists alike.

I define artists with the archival impulse as essentially unconstrained researchers. In relation to this, archivist Neal White suggests that current art practices of working with archives could function as research in the expanded field. That is to say, a deeper form of archival engagement as research could serve as a new form of networking or mapping beyond cultural institutions.⁶ What first sparks my interest is the process of searching repeatedly, discursively, obsessively, where engaging with the archive rather than achieving a solid outcome is the aim. Research as a self-centred activity drawn into archival materials is always in a constant flux of fallibility and self-awareness. According to Celeste Olalquiaga, "research is akin to collecting: what is collected matters less than the process it engages and its ability to become an all-consuming endeavor".⁷ The researcher in the archive is fundamentally motivated by "the

⁵ Michael Ann Holly and Marquard Smith (eds.), *What Is Research in the Visual Arts?: Obsession, Archive, Encounter*, Clark Studies in the Visual Arts, Mass.: Excelsior Printing Company, distributed by New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008, p. xxi.

⁶ Neal White, 'Experiments and Archives in the Expanded Field', in Judy Vaknin et al. (eds.), *All This Stuff: Archiving the Artist*, Oxfordshire: Libri Publishing, 2013, pp. 47-61.

⁷ Celeste Olalquiaga, 'Dead Stock: The Researcher as Collector of Failed Goods', in Michael Ann Holly and Marquard Smith (eds.), *What Is Research in the Visual Arts?: Obsession, Archive, Encounter*, Clark Studies in the Visual Arts, Mass.: Excelsior Printing Company, distributed by New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008, p. 33.

obsession for the unknown, for the discovery of the surprising thing, the written line, the piece of paper, the object that will transform our understanding of something we took for granted”.⁸ Some are feverishly obsessed with their fields of study, like Sisyphus repetitively forced to roll a rock up a hill. The Greek myth of Sisyphus invites one to rethink the ideas of repetition and failure as a common procedure of any research, which consequently leads me to suggest that the “artist as Sisyphus”.

Sisyphus was the son of King Aeolus of Thessaly and Enarete, the founder and first king of Ephyra (Corinth), who tricked Thanatos (Death) and disrespected Zeus. Because of his impudence towards the gods, Sisyphus suffered the punishment of eternally rolling a rock up a hill that always rolled back down, forcing him to start all over again.⁹ This story of Sisyphus conveys an endless loop between repetition of the given task and the failure to complete it. A Sisyphean task is therefore often described as an “indeterminable and purposeless labour” that “fails to reach its proposed goal and is then repeated”.¹⁰ The story peculiarly denotes that we generally have trouble with the concept of repetition and failure as being unproductive, valueless, and banal. However, it is important to note that Sisyphus’s endeavour does not simply refer to an endless agony in vain. The thesis will explore the idea that the Sisyphean loop metaphor implies so much more.

First, the artist as Sisyphus persistently recognises the aporetic moments of the archival impulse being archival and anarchival at the same time. I shall focus on the paradoxical moments where the archival impulse, based on repetitive activities of collecting, accumulating, and classifying, turns into the anarchival impulse against the conventional principles of archiving and archives. Above all, I argue that the two elements of repetition and failure are the key wheels of archival/anarchival performativity in archival art practices, which are inevitably activated and harnessed when artists use real archives for research, build their own artistic,

⁸ Serge Guilbaut, ‘Factory of Facts: Research as Obsession with the Scent of History’, in Michael Ann Holly and Marquard Smith (eds.), *What Is Research in the Visual Arts?: Obsession, Archive, Encounter*, Clark Studies in the Visual Arts, Mass.: Excelsior Printing Company, distributed by New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008, p. 108.

⁹ Apollodorus, *The Library of Greek Mythology*, translated by Robin Hard, Oxford: Oxford World’s Classics, 2008, p. 44.

¹⁰ Emma Cocker, ‘Over and Over, Again and Again’, in Lisa Le Feuvre (ed.), *Failure*, London: Whitechapel Gallery, Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2010, p. 154.

alternative archives or, more critically, destroy existing ones, and deconstruct the notion of archives. That is to say, the artists' critique of the archive that starts from the archival impulse subsequently heads towards the deconstruction, breakup, and subversion of the archive as a system of order or knowledge performing the Sisyphean loop of repetition and failure. More importantly, this simultaneous archival/anarchival impulse not only deconstructs the archival system as knowledge production and social power but also reconstructs multiple potentials or creations of the new in archiving and archives.

Second, in the course of archival research, the artist as Sisyphus voluntarily or involuntarily experiences a constant fallibility which is a creative and an iterative yet renewed process each time. The artist as Sisyphus also unveils the failing and failed moments under the guise of archival neutrality and activates a creative sense of repetitive research and performance. Coupled with repetition, the unusual and irregular rhythms of failing moments, malfunctions, errors, and anomalies infiltrated into the archive are another axis of archival/anarchival performativity, which can dismantle the normalised and static state of the archive in a conventional sense. These failing rhythms can be introduced by archival projects of Sisyphean artists on purpose. Otherwise, if what is to be archived already signals the disoriented, inconsistent, flawed, traumatic, or queer, these uncategorised rhythms could transform a stable state and a coherent organisation (of the archival system, at any rate).

The idea of "failure" throughout the thesis is mainly propelled by my attendance at one of a series of performances by Aaron Williamson (b. 1964). The relevant piece, *The Collapsing Lecture*, held at Goldsmiths College on 4th December 2008, is a distinctive example of "failure" staged in a performance setting.¹¹ I attended it as a MA Visual Cultures student expecting to listen to a regular lecture series by a guest lecturer. The hour-long lecture, however, seemed to go entirely wrong with a range of technical and circumstantial problems. It simply betrayed the audience's expectation that a formal lecture should deliver information clearly. In fact,

¹¹ Williamson re-enacted another version of *The Collapsing Lecture* for the conference titled 'Performing Knowing' at Whitechapel Gallery on 19th June 2009, hosted by Professor Gavin Butt at the Visual Cultures Department, Goldsmiths College. See Aaron Williamson, 'The Collapsing Lecture', in Gavin Butt (ed.), *Performing/Knowing*, Birmingham: Article Press, 2010, pp. 53-68.

Williamson's lecture was a piece of performance to show an idea of failure. It includes the salient points of staging failure, which eventually led me to suggest the idea of 'Performing the Archive' and 'Queering the Archive' as one half of this thesis's discussion.

For more than 45 minutes, Williamson's repetitive failures deliberately collapsed the lecture, which is reminiscent of the Sisyphean task. The Sisyphean loop, at large, is a metaphor for resistance to univocal totality, mastery, perfectionism, and hegemonic discourse. In opposition to the stereotypical view of failure merely a step to success, what I pay attention to is its positive capacity and quality to reconsider the habitual mode of thoughts and experience. As a critical medium and a navigational tool, staging failure serves to shake off any rigid intent to seek teleological and finalised outcomes, instead engendering a more playful and liberating way of knowing and unknowing, of doing and undoing. With a close analysis of Williamson's performance, I shall discuss the issue of staging failure in the context of archives and archival art and relate it to the attitude of Sisyphean artists. In particular, I shall examine how the fallible, ambiguous, queer, and struggling conditions of the event can turn into creativity and how seemingly unproductive and purposeless activities can bring up an alternative pedagogy of queering customary situations in daily life. However, be warned: I do not intend to fix the binary oppositions of success/failure and authenticity/repetition here. This will be clearer as my arguments are developed throughout the thesis.

The Sisyphean loop may alternatively enable both artists and viewers to encounter new strategies or perspectives for unconventional, radical, or unusual forms of doing research inside and outside the archives. In short, such Sisyphean archival research generates repetitive and failing rhythms, maps of archival/anarchival performativity. The study will demonstrate how this mapping is enabled and revealed using a range of case studies of archival art.

Then, what does it mean to be mapping? The journey of mapping the Sisyphean archives throughout will proceed as if you initially draw the map. Assume that you are a cartographer or an urban planner. Once you decide what kind of map or project to design, you would probably think of each independent layer of different contents through which you want to visualise according to its purpose. The map of the Sisyphean archive will be composed of a

series of different layers so that its final map will be realised by overlapping. In this sense, James Corner suggests the importance of “layering” as a key strategy in contemporary design and planning. He states: “When these separate layers are overlaid together, a stratified amalgam of relationships amongst parts appears.”¹² Undermining the limited scope of the single master plan, a series of layers independently structured leads to “a mosaic-like field of multiple orders” to produce its richness and complexity.¹³ Thus, the separate layers of each blueprint or plan that show the particular contents of each scheme should be created and those layers will be layered and layered all together at the end in order to “develop a polyrhythmic and cross-cultural condition”.¹⁴ By doing so, one content in one sheet can be more clearly indicated, and at the same time, once those multiple sheets are accumulated, the “performative not representational”¹⁵ map could be embodied. In order to create a multiple and extensive layering, I develop my arguments by focusing on diverse patches of contemporary archival art cases together, which will effectively show us a more interwoven sense of the bigger picture. For a more multiple layering, I shall draw on a mixture of relatively well-known artists and lesser known, emerging artists. I also wish the thesis to have a balanced analysis between artists from both the Western world and those from Asia. Hence, each chapter or subtheme that I shall discuss is equivalent to each layout of the map, which enables me to more precisely describe how the Sisyphian archive is richly mapped out.

Mapping has become an important strategy in artistic practices in recent years as the means by which dynamic layers of creativity can emerge and repressed potential and unexpected outcomes can be freely actualised. The map is no longer merely a cartographic technique to represent the borders of territory imposing hegemonic relations, or to analytically visualise the already planned reality. The relationship between art and cartography began when artists in the twentieth century utilised maps as a visual trope and mapping as a process. In relation to this, I shall briefly review the cartographical interests and practices in the modern art

¹² James Corner, ‘The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention’, in D. Cosgrove (ed.) *Mappings*, London: Reaktion Books, 1999, p. 235.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 236.

¹⁵ Ibid.

movements of the 1960s and 1970s as it was these two decades when mapping as an artistic methodology prominently emerged.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari indicate that the map is “open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification” and it can be reversed and reworked by an individual or social formation.¹⁶ Mapping is more like a performative process to dismantle what is conventionally known and to inaugurate new grounds upon the hidden traces of a living world.¹⁷ Mapping is now an idea of “performance” to be searching, disclosing, and engendering the new conditions of cultural projects, detouring around fixed sets of thought. As Corner claims, it is time to be more concerned with what maps actually do rather than with what they mean.¹⁸ Applying this critical strategy of mapping, I suggest mapping the Sisyphean archives reflects a concern with what the archive can do rather than what it means. First, mapping the Sisyphean archives can be a critical tool for artists to revalue negative perceptions towards the generalised ideas of repetition and failure. Second, mapping the Sisyphean archives can be an interrogative radar to notice the inevitable drives of repetition and failure, detected from both the inherent nature of the archive per se and archival artists’ *modus operandi*. It can also perform as a resistant mode of constantly doubting the existing physical and conceptual properties of archives and prescriptive and fixed principles of archiving. Lastly, mapping the Sisyphean archives, above all, becomes a performative process to turn a stagnant site of archives into an imaginative and open space for future narratives and creativity. Therefore, in mapping, used here as a core methodology, the Sisyphean archives can be both doing and undoing, taking shape by way of researching, assembling, and layering, performing its own undoing by showing how the concurrent rhythms of success/failure, archival/anarchival, and deconstructing/reconstructing are always and already embedded in and performed through archives.

¹⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Brian Massumi, London: Bloomsbury, 1987/2013, p. 12.

¹⁷ Corner, *op. cit.*, pp. 244-250.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

As a part of this mapping, one critical method that I want to emphasise is “queering” the archive. Queering can suggest alternative ways of being, doing, and knowing beyond conventional understandings of concepts or conditions that have been stabilised and rendered neutral. Queering as a methodology can have two meanings in this thesis. One is a performative approach to disrupting determinate characteristics of gender as a naturalised norm and undoing of heteronormativity. Failing or undoing of heteronormativity introduces queer alternative languages continually pushing and troubling heteronormative frames in the making. The other meaning is the deconstructive and transformative way by which any disciplined norm or dichotomous boundary in mainstream culture and history is destabilised. Queering the archive will map the queer deconstructive and reconstructive process of archival/anarchival performativity. The investigation of queer archival art will contribute to the dislocation of any normative logic and reality imposed on archives and the reconsideration of anything extraordinary, unusual, unfamiliar, or deviant in the archival system.

The thesis consists of three main chapters. Chapter 1 is an overview of what it means to be ‘A Sisyphean Loop in Contemporary Archival Art’, giving a theoretical ground for my core arguments. I shall draw the current archival obsession of contemporary art and define the confluent tendency of the term archive used in various interdisciplinary realms including art and visual cultures. I shall then discuss how archival artists and researchers as Sisyphus produce “a visual form of knowledge” with a focus on the case studies of the recent exhibition by George Didi-Huberman *Atlas: How to Carry the World on One’s Back?*, which reinterprets the project *Mnemosyne Atlas* by Aby Warburg in a contemporary context. Then, this chapter particularly elaborates how the Sisyphean loop of repetition and failure can be related to the concepts of the archive, archiving, and archival art. I shall develop my critical assumption that the inevitable rhythms or energies of repetition and failure run through archival art, which highlights that this Sisyphean archival art has an inextricable connection with the concurrent yet conflictive forces of archival and anarchival impulses.

Chapter 2 thoroughly investigates multifaceted aspects of “repetition”. Featured as ‘Repetition as Accumulation’, ‘Repetition without Origin’, and ‘Repetition as Creation’

respectively, external and internal rhythms of repetition in Sisyphean archival art at large will be identified. The first section, 'Repetition as Accumulation', deals with the repetition of the external appearance of listing, enumerating, and accumulating as visual languages of archival art, which mimics bureaucratic and administrative procedures. Seemingly following standardised principles of institutional archives, artists' archival obsession and never-ending collecting drive are often invested in a different scope of objects and purpose in favour of trivia, ordinariness, and unarchivable immateriality. If their obsessive archival accumulation goes to extremes, pathological rhythms in repetition emerge. I shall illuminate how these pathological rhythms in artists' mimetic archives contaminate the integrity and consistency of institutional archives within the very territories of cultural institutions and what they then alternatively suggest.

In the second section, 'Repetition without Origin', the internal domain of repetition that is more unrecognisably and immanently operated by Sisyphean archival art will be explored, mainly referring to Jacques Derrida's deconstructive reading of the archive. This study basically projects disbelief in any mnemonic origins and historical objectives in archives. Sisyphean archival art practices will demonstrate how the compelling force of retrieving the past as it was through archival records is repeatedly suspended and void. Such exposed distrust in absolute memory and a monolithic, authoritative voice as origin in the archive will be critically portrayed in this section against the background of the nineteenth century. This was the era when Freudian psychoanalysis began to explore the unconscious mind, photography as a reproductive technology was invented, and European imperialism was feverishly expanding across the world. Material and immaterial conditions of the archive were directly and indirectly influenced by these paradigm shifts in the nineteenth century, of which historical and cultural remnants have been exercised up to today in many ways. I shall map out Sisyphean artists who attempt to deconstruct myths of colonial archives that wished comprehensive knowledge control and who question whether the capacity of photographic and digital archives based on unlimited reproducible images can guarantee to seize mnemonic origins or mastery. In the last section, 'Repetition as Creation', the idea of repetition as a creative logic is argued, inspired by

Gilles Deleuze's thoughts on rhizomatic creativity. The archival/anarchival performativity of Sisyphean archival art ultimately moves toward new creation from destruction. Artists' untiring contestation in the archive dismantles rigid tissues of archival operations so that fluctuating ruptures slip from the archives. I shall propose that these ruptures or loopholes become new foundations from which a more imaginative and emancipatory sense of archival narratives can start again. Mapping of Sisyphean artists' factual yet fictitious storytelling drifting through the past, present, and future will unveil how they facilitate archival/anarchival rhythms of repetition to produce living creations again and again in and out of the archive. These illustrations will reflect on the self-evolving impetus of archival art to create repetitive differences in flux.

Chapter 3 emphasises a positive dimension of "failure" as another axis of archival/anarchival performativity. Inspired by Aaron Williamson's *The Collapsing Lecture*, this chapter addresses Sisyphean artists' propensity to deal repeatedly with unusual and irregular rhythms of failing, malfunctions, errors, and anomalies from within the archive by revaluing negative connotations of failure itself and introducing an alternative pedagogy of purposely staging failure in their practices. While identifying different qualities between performance and archives, the first half of the chapter 'Performing the Archive' explores an expanding frame of performing archival remains on the premise of failure by means of enactment as repetition and reconstruction. Sisyphean artists' corporeal and participatory efforts of staging failure will illustrate how a polyphonic resonance of fallible attempts is actualised and how a new sensorial dimension of historiography can be suggested. Their bodily archives as becoming-archives open up experimental zones eroding archival boundaries between inside and outside, performer and audience, and past and contemporaneity. In particular, performing seemingly fallible, purposeless labour, and futile processes will be newly credited as a new mode of thinking and knowing to create a space for doubt, resistance, and opportunity in Sisyphean archives. The second half of the chapter 'Queering the Archive' focuses on dislocation or subversion of the normative logic and reality in archives. A dichotomous categorisation of non-queer and queer and of success and failure is etiolated

through a navigational approach of Sisyphean archival art that differently collects queer histories, desires, and feelings and alternatively constructs the queer world of being undisciplined and non-conforming. With the idiosyncratic aesthetics of queering, queer archival projects build up collaborative and affective connections. In addition, queer fictional archives of storytelling will lead us to a zone free of heteronormativity and homophobia, where imaginative and emancipatory queer time and space are realised.

My mapping of Sisyphean archives throughout the thesis is layering each subtheme of all chapters explained above, searching for clues, wandering around, detouring, interweaving different archival voices and artistic narratives, sometimes going back to the same questions again and again, resisting, subverting, repeating, failing, and creating within the ocean of contemporary archival art. Queer theorist Simon Ofield describes research as “cruising”. That is to say, research is a kind of browsing in which you can “never be quite sure if you will find what you are looking for, or if you will come across something you never knew you wanted, or even knew existed”.¹⁹ The process of cruising archives may enable researchers to encounter unexpected detours and turns of research direction so that multiple entryways can be opened. Similarly, mapping the Sisyphean archives will be an unpredictable journey as to what type of map or what kind of cruising trajectory could be drawn at the end. The perpetual process itself of archiving and an archiving, deconstructing and reconstructing, and arranging and re-arranging layers and layers of my arguments, will dynamically suggest the liberal yet fierce ways in which artists approach historical knowledge and past events mediated through archives and will forge a performative methodology to reconsider habitual, symbolic orders embedded in archiving.

¹⁹ Simon Ofield, ‘Cruising the Archive’, *Journal of Visual Culture*, Vol. 4, No. 3, Dec 2005, pp. 351-364, requoted in Michael Ann Holly and Marquard Smith (eds.), *What Is Research in the Visual Arts?: Obsession, Archive, Encounter*, Clark Studies in the Visual Arts, Mass.: Excelsior Printing Company, distributed by New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008, p.xx.

CHAPTER 1.

A SISYPHEAN LOOP IN CONTEMPORARY ARCHIVAL ART

The aim of Chapter 1 is to develop the core arguments of what the Sisyphian loop is in archival art and of how the anarchival impulse driven by artists' art production is realised and visualised, highlighting the current obsession of contemporary art with the past and the archive. This chapter will provide a theoretical grounding of the subject and includes a literature review of the overall arguments. By pointing out why an obsessive, interdisciplinary interest in the issue of archives emerged, I shall review the central arguments concerning archives made by Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. I shall further examine arguments presented by Hal Foster about archivally driven art. Their insights provide crucial points upon which to expand my research questions on the contemporary archival impulse and on the distinctive discovery of the concurrent yet conflictive forces taking place in it. More critically, I shall examine the exhibition *Atlas: How to Carry the World on One's Back?* curated by Georges Didi-Huberman, with reference to Aby Warburg's image project, *Mnemosyne Atlas*, as Didi-Huberman's curatorial paradigm and choices of exhibited artists indicate not only that archival art can function as "a visual form of knowledge" but also portray how mapping itself works for a methodology in art productions. In particular, mapping has historical roots in the modern art movements of the twentieth century, used as a construct in itself, as a performance, and as the documentation of that performance. This study will enrich my project of mapping the Sisyphian archive as a methodological performance.

1.1. WHY NOW?

The centrality of the archive is indeed an ongoing phenomenon in the contemporary art world. For instance, Massimiliano Gioni curated two thematically archive-related biennales: the 2010 Gwangju Biennale *10,000 Lives*, and the 2013 Venice Biennale *The Encyclopaedic Palace*. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev's 2012 dOCUMENTA (13) incorporated the extensive use of historical archives and artists who employ archives.²⁰ The most recent one, the 2015 Venice Biennale, curated by Okwui Enwezor, ambitiously attempted to envisage *All the World's Future* by archiving "shadow histories"²¹ of the current world and embracing disparate voices from an extensive range of artists outside the Western-centred art world. Overlapping projects are also actively realised, where archivists and archival institutions collaborate with contemporary artists in an interdisciplinary sense. The Contemporary Art Society UK announced its 2013 Annual Award to support the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology in Oxford to work with 2012 Turner Prize winner Elizabeth Price, who was commissioned to create a new work inspired by the museum's collections and archives. Similarly, the BBC chose six Scottish moving-image artists, who were given access to the BBC archives to interpret and incorporate them into their own artworks. Given artistic and curatorial directions, it is evident that there is a constantly increasing preoccupation in the current art world with both theoretical and practical aspects of the archive.

Why has such a distinctive archival turn in art emerged and why are artists and curators obsessed with archivally driven research and projects? Some aspects can be glimpsed through two art historians' answers. Dieter Roelstraete points out that the current "historiographic turn in art" is obsessed with "archiving, forgetfulness, memoirs and memories, nostalgia, oblivion, re-enactment, remembrance, reminiscence, retrospection" and argues that this indulgence of

²⁰ *Artspace* editors, 'Art 101: How the Art World Caught Archive Fever', *Artspace*, 22 January 2014, [Online] Available at: http://www.artspace.com/magazine/art_101/the_art_worlds_love_affair_with_archives?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_term=Master&utm_campaign=January_26_2014_Editorial_Weekly, Last accessed 27 December 2016.

²¹ Coline Milliard, 'Venice Biennale Curator Okwui Enwezor on "All the World's Futures," Karl Marx, and the Havana Biennial Boycott', *artnet*, 11 March 2015, [Online] Available at: <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/okwui-enwezor-venice-biennale-karl-marx-havana-biennial-boycott-274420>, Last accessed 25 December 2016.

historiography can be found in the dismal and depressing mood of the Bush era and its “war on terror” and that artists are thus driven to rewrite history as a critical tool.²² Mark Godfrey also recognises that “historical research and representation appear central to contemporary art” and that “there is an increasing number of artists whose practice starts with research in archives, and others who deploy what has been termed an archival form of research”, where this type of artist is identified as an historian.²³ He finds the reason behind such a historical turn in the proliferation of photographic media and digital obsolescence in our age, which causes artists to feverishly respond to the past against the fear of loss.²⁴ It is this climate that I search for the Sisyphean archives in contemporary art.

When art practices engage with such subjects of archiving and writing history, the blurred, ambiguous nature of defining the concept of the archive becomes readily apparent. Frequently, the terms “archives”, “libraries”, and “museums” are used interchangeably and sometimes carelessly mixed in use despite the fact that the terms are not synonymous. In general, we can distinguish *archives* as repositories of documents, manuscripts, and images; *libraries* as those of published books, journals, and other media; and *museums* as those of other types of cultural artefacts and objects.²⁵ In the case of digital archives, the term more ambiguously refers to a long-term storage device or a directory of digital data stored in a computer or on the Internet, implying the existence of both a digital technology and a storage medium for a collection of existing electronic documents. Hence, the contents of these different entities often refer to the entire extant historical records in a broad sense.

With regard to this point, Robert Martin in his keynote presentation at the RLG Member’s Forum in 2002 indicates that, historically, the distinctions between archives, libraries, and museums have not always been clear on the grounds that they are all institutions based on

²² Dieter Roelstraete, ‘After the Historiographic Turn: Current Findings’, *e-flux*, Journal 6, May 2009, [Online] Available at: <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/after-the-historiographic-turn-current-findings/>, Last accessed 11 April 2014.

²³ Mark Godfrey, ‘The Artist as Historian’, *October*, No. 120, Spring 2007, No. 120, pp. 142-143.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

²⁵ Marlene Manoff, ‘Theories of the Archive from across the Disciplines’, *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*, Volume 4, Number 1, January 2004, The John Hopkins University Press, p. 10.

collections and basically collect “documents”.²⁶ Martin explains the expanded meaning of “documents” by exploring a few scholars’ works. He starts with the definition suggested by Paul Otlet, one of the founders of the documentation movement in the 1930s: the idea of a document to include a range of objects and artefacts as well as the conventional notion of a document as text, denoting all “informative things”.²⁷ An extended definition offered in 1951 by a French librarian, Suzanne Briet, is then elaborated: a document as “any physical or symbolic sign, preserved or recorded, intended to represent, to reconstruct or to demonstrate a physical or conceptual phenomenon”.²⁸ This implies that all types of evidences rather than just texts and objects should be considered documents. The digital environment has further stretched this interpretation. David M. Levy, a computer scientist, argues that documents in the digital age include all types of materials, such as text, audio, image files, and even multimedia materials on the Web, while mentioning that the traditional notion of the document is still bound up with writing and paper.²⁹ On synthesising these expansive definitions of documents, from paper-based texts and a diverse range of objects to all types of digital materials, Martin concludes that archives, libraries, and museums ultimately collect this expanded notion of documents so that it no longer makes sense to distinguish them according to what they collect.³⁰ The current digital environment has accelerated and consequently blurred these distinctions. Archives, libraries, and museums have begun to increasingly open their digitised materials to general users via the Internet as they have started using digital information technology. The development of digital collections accessible from anyplace is transforming the methods of using and exploring stored materials that were heretofore kept in restricted areas and, because of this increasing change from the physical to the digital world, the distinction between text and

²⁶ Robert Martin, ‘Sharing the Wealth’, RLG Member’s Forum, Washington D.C., October 18 2002, [Online] Available at: <http://worldcat.org/areviewer/1/OCC/2007/09/28/0000073852/viewer/file483.html>, Last accessed 28 August 2015.

²⁷ W. Boyd Rayward (ed. & trans), *International Organization and Dissemination of Knowledge: Selected Essays of Paul Otlet*, Fid publication Vol. 684, Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1990, p. 153 and p. 197, cited in *ibid*.

²⁸ Suzanne Briet, *Qu’est-ce que La Documentation*, Edit, Paris, 1951, p. 7, cited in Martin, *op. cit*.

²⁹ David M. Levy, *Scrolling Forward: Making Sense of Documents in the Digital Age*, 2001, New York: Arcade Publishing, cited in Martin, *op. cit*.

³⁰ Martin, *op. cit*.

image, object and artefact seems to diminish.³¹ In this sense, according to Marlene Manoff, archives, libraries, and museums have been conflated and the term “archive”, inflated to become a loose signifier referring to a disparate set of concepts in the recent archival discourse.³²

Likewise, when artists engage with a set of archives as a critical target, their central concern tends to be the general social and cultural organisations where “documents” are collected or archival structures and strategies that are believed to materialise archival objectivity, systematisation, codification, and homogeneity, regardless of whether it is an archive, library, or museum. In other words, they often attack the ways in which the documents are accumulated, sorted, and distributed and how the normative notions of taxonomy and repository are formulated and dismantle the means by which knowledge and history are mystified and empowered. They also aim to deconstruct the concept of documentation itself or to speculate about a digital technology as a loose signifier by frequently merging three different divisions, rhizomatically playing at the intersections between them, thus creating the counter-archives and alternative artistic archives across those distinctions, and subverting the established archival power. I shall, therefore, use the term “archive” in this broadest sense of “conflation” throughout the thesis although its scope and meaning can sometimes be reified depending on different cases of artworks or practices.

The various types of critical art practices that question the archive in contemporary art and beyond are not completely new phenomena. The archival turn in many fields has been largely influenced by two significant works, Michel Foucault’s *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969) and Jacques Derrida’s *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (1996). While Foucault discusses the historical *a priori* and the question of the archive, Derrida critically highlights the intrinsic instability of historical archives and memory and the impact of electronic media. Both philosophers’ insights into the archive have provided theoretical grounds for the recent iteration

³¹ *ibid.*

³² Manoff, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

of archival trends and have simulated artistic, critical, and curatorial practices at large.³³

Derrida indicates that the archive takes place through “domiciliation” or “house arrest”,³⁴ when elucidating the meaning of the archive from the Greek word *arkhe*: “the commencement and the commandment”.³⁵ The *arkheion* is a place where things commence and where the documents’ guardians, the *archons*, are in command. It is “there where authority, social order are exercised” and “order is given”.³⁶ Derrida calls this archontic power “the power of consignation”.³⁷ He continues to describe the political power inherent in the archive: “there is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory. Effective democratisation can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution and its interpretation.”³⁸

Meanwhile, Foucault sees the archive in terms of “systems that establish statements as events and things” and “the law of what can be said”.³⁹ He asserts that the archive is “a general system of the formulation and transformation of statements”⁴⁰ and “that which, outside ourselves, delimits us”.⁴¹ It is thus impossible for us to describe our own archive at the present time since the archive is the very thing that “gives to what we can say, its mode of appearance and existence, and its system of accumulation, historicity, and disappearance”.⁴² Foucault’s fundamental argument is that all social mechanisms in the modern era operate through power and that this power relation is scientifically inscribed and prevails in any social system. Derrida and Foucault similarly detected the power operating in the system of the archive and saw the institution of the archive as a form of state power and authority. Carolyn Steedman remarks that there is an intermittent dialogue between Derrida and Foucault where they regard the archive as

³³ Lisa Darms, ‘Reviewed Works: Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art by Okwui Enwezor for the International Centre for Photography; Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Photography by Okwui Enwezor’, *The American Archivist*, Vol. 72, No. 1, Spring–Summer, 2009, pp. 253-257.

³⁴ Derrida, op.cit., p. 2.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 1.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 3.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 4.

³⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, translated by A.M. Sheridan Smith, London and New York: Routledge, 2002, p. 145.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 146.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 146-147.

“a way of seeing or a way of knowing; as a symbol of power”.⁴³ Such interpretations have inspiringly contributed to artistic and curatorial recognition of the archive as a way of seeing and knowing, a way in which the grand system operates knowledge, history, culture, and power.

In fact, having such doubt regarding the archive as a grand system has a rich art historical legacy. There were already Surrealist and Conceptual artists who brought the logic of the archive and bureaucratic culture into question in the early twentieth century. Dadaist montage and early Surrealism endeavoured to elude the archive’s operations at every level by means of dramatising contingency, chance, and moments of rupture of any records and events.⁴⁴ They generally had antipathy to traditional forms of art and resisted the linearity of the claims to authenticity and neutrality of the historical process associated with the nineteenth century’s ideal dream for “archivisation” under total control.⁴⁵ Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968) is a notorious example; he enjoyed mocking the museum system and museological classification and challenged the uniqueness of genuine works of art with his “Readymades”. For instance, his *Le Boîte-en-valise* (1935–41) (Fig. 1.1.1) is a unique piece of his own portable museum in a suitcase, which contains handcrafted miniatures and reproductions of his actual works, the related notes, and photographs that he developed. This work disputes the boundaries between handcrafting and mechanical reproduction, between original and replica, and between the contents and the contexts of display.⁴⁶ Okwui Enwezor admired this work, stating that “[this] museum as archive” is “a site of reflection on the prodigious output of historical artifacts, images, and the various taxonomies” and “a sly critique of the museum as institution and the artwork as artefact”.⁴⁷ In the meantime, the early Surrealists were another group of artists who reconfigured the meaning of the archive. Including André Breton and Antonin Artaud, the Surrealists ran a Paris-based office, the *Bureau de Recherches Surréalistes*, where they regularly gathered and held discussions. They incessantly collected, recorded, and classified

⁴³ Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002, p. 2.

⁴⁴ Sven Spieker, *The Big Archive: Art from Bureaucracy*, Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 2008, p. 6.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 6–11.

⁴⁶ Elena Filipovic, ‘A Museum That Is Not’, *e-flux*, Journal 4, Mar 2009, [Online] Available at: <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/a-museum-that-is-not/>, Last accessed 24 May 2014.

⁴⁷ Okwui Enwezor, *Archive Fever: Uses of the Documents in Contemporary Art*, exhibition catalogue, International Center of Photography, Steidl, 2008, p. 14.

any possible idea and data of the unconscious mind, notes, and manuscripts, as well as managed routine activities and paperwork during regular working hours at the Bureau.⁴⁸ Sven Spieker considers this archive of Surrealism a bureaucracy and indicates its paradoxical feature aiming at the preservation of what is not known, not remembered, and not retrieved.⁴⁹ With the organisational and administrative tools in the office, the Surrealists seemed to put forgotten realms into files and to encompass a series of contingencies, ruptures, surprises, non-sequiturs, and discordances during any creative process involving records and events. Since the Dadaists and Surrealists posed these types of precedent challenges, many artists have questioned knowledge production and distribution conducted by institutions and institutional taxonomy and classification and criticised the museum system itself, often intentionally dismantling its hierarchy.

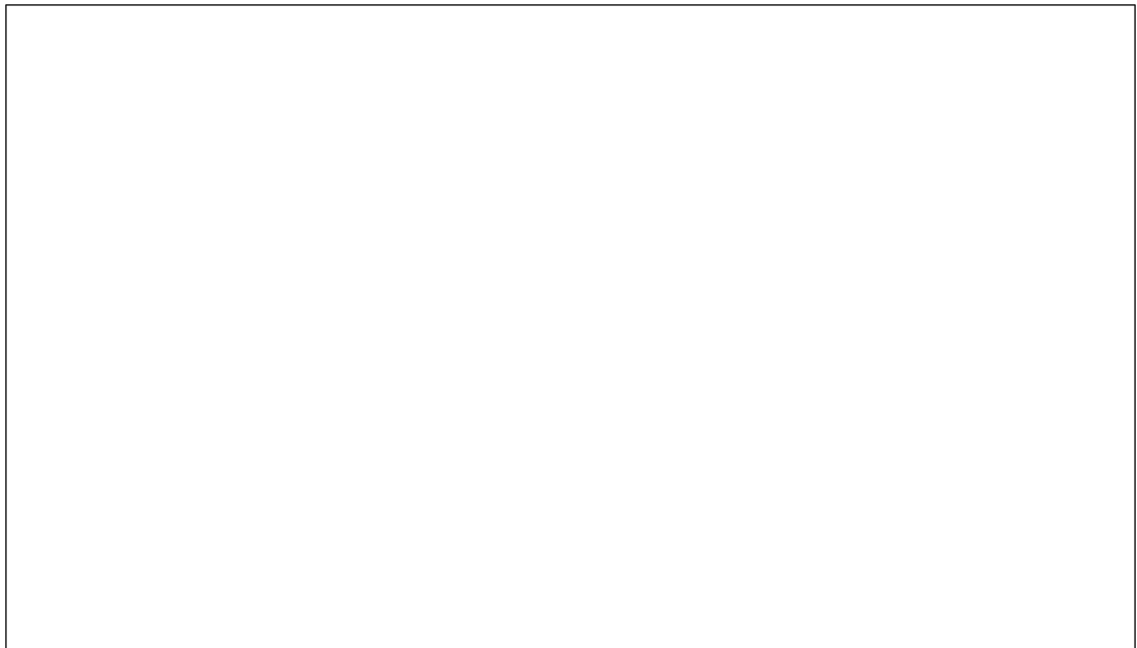


Figure 1.1.1. Marcel Duchamp, *Le Boîte en valise*, 1941–1942, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

⁴⁸ Spieker, op. cit., p. 93.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 96.

More recently, Hal Foster, in his remarkable article “An Archival Impulse”, tracks the genealogy of “archivally driven art” since the 1960s. He explores how archivally driven artworks have become frequently recognisable art practices and he identifies what they refer to as “archival impulse”.⁵⁰ What Foster covers here is a more extensive spectrum of archival art beyond what the early twentieth century’s avant-garde artists attempted. He acknowledges that this impulse is not new, referencing “the photofiles of Alexander Rodchenko and the photomontages of John Heartfield in the prewar period and the pinboard aesthetics of the Independent Group, remediated representations from Robert Rauschenberg through Richard Prince, the informational structures of Conceptual art, institutional critique, and feminist art in the postwar period”.⁵¹ However, he distinguishes these previous practices from the recent tendency by asserting that it deserves to be considered “a distinctive character of its own”.⁵² Their themes and styles of contemporary archival impulse are varied, not only attacking the archival system and power but also showing the back side of or the bypass of capitalism today and the fictional world as a failed futuristic vision. Citing works by Gerhard Richter, Christian Boltanski, Thomas Hirschhorn, Tacita Dean, Marcel Broodthaers, Susan Hiller, and Sam Durant, he argues that these new art practices displaying the archival impulse are in favour of found images, found objects, and the installation format, which “propose new orders of affective association”.⁵³ Foster highlights that the problematic issues around the archive became a significant metaphor within visual art and art criticism in the late twentieth century.

As indicated above, from Foucault and Derrida to Foster, the full scale of theoretical concerns with the archive have provided fertile ground to understand the critical aspects of the contemporary archival turn. Today’s archival users, makers, and thinkers have investigated the problematic concept of archive shaped by social, historical, political, and technological forces. Both Foucault and Derrida offer philosophical reflections on “archives as knowledge-power-

⁵⁰ Hal Foster, ‘An Archival Impulse’, *October*, no. 110, Fall 2004, pp. 3-22.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

history”,⁵⁴ arguing that the archive is not a simple form giving direct access to the past or pure memory but a complicated constellation inherently bearing political power and institutional authority. Thus, the archive can be understood as a historical space, a political space, a social memorial space, or a public or private space and is now further extended to a virtual space with the growing process of digitisation. The archive is inextricably associated with two preconditions: “a physical site”, which is a literal architecture enclosed by the protective walls and “an imaginative site” whose conceptual boundaries are constantly shifting.⁵⁵ Because of the appearance of the virtual space of archives, the internal and external slippages between the two have been even enlarged. The archival concept and matter are in constant flux. The more these boundaries shift, the more imaginative possibilities open up. This in turn causes archival thinkers to be profoundly driven to capture the latent moments within the archive and to consider the archive at the intersection of concept and materiality as Uriel Orlow points out.⁵⁶ The archive thinker can similarly be compared to “the artist as Sisyphus” who I aim to discuss in this thesis. Their shared critiques view the archive as a system in a constant state of flux and to acknowledge the fallibility and inscrutability of the archive that require a repetitive pursuit of research, decipherment, and deconstruction.

The idea of the archival artist as Sisyphus is critically propelled further by Foster’s final question in “An Archival Impulse”: “Might archival art emerge out of a similar sense of a failure in cultural memory, of a default in productive traditions?”⁵⁷ Here, Foster suggests that the archival impulse might come from the deviated zones of cultural memory and traditions, where things are failed and delayed and where a systematic symbolic order no longer operates. It is this archival art, emerging out of failure, in which I am interested. This question is even more valid and resonating today, warning us about the fetishisation of success and other outcomes in the neo-liberal age and the intensifying desire to capture obsolescent moments by

⁵⁴ Jennifer S. Milligan, “‘What Is an Archive?’ in the History of Modern France”, in Antoinette Burton (ed.), *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions and the Writing of Histories*, Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2005, p. 177.

⁵⁵ Paul J. Voss and Marta L. Werner, ‘Toward a Poetics of the Archive Introduction’, in *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, Vol. 32, no. 1, Spring, Atlanta, Ga: Georgia State University, 1999, p. i.

⁵⁶ Uriel Orlow, ‘Latent Archives, Roving Lens’, in Jane Connarty and Josephine Lanyon (eds.), *Ghosting: The Role of the Archive within Contemporary Artists’ Film and Video*, exhibition catalogue, Bristol: Picture This Moving Image, 2006a, p. 35.

⁵⁷ Foster, op. cit., p. 21-22.

digitising all information with up-to-date media technology in a digital age. Foster concludes that “the paranoid dimension of archival art is the other side of its utopian ambition – its desire to turn belatedness into becomingness, to recoup failed visions in art, literature, philosophy and everyday life into possible scenarios of alternative kinds of social relations, to transform the no-place of the archive into the no-place of utopia”.⁵⁸ This can be rephrased by stating that archival art appears to create a series of cracks or pauses deferring our utopian desire to address any unified, secured sense of history and culture, transferred by various social forms of memory prosthesis such as archives, museums, and libraries.

Likewise, Emma Cocker argues that, in certain artworks, the Sisyphean loop of repeated failure is performed as “a generative force, where it functions as a device for deferring closure or completion or it can be understood as a mode of resistance through which to challenge or even refuse the pressure of dominant goal-oriented doctrines”.⁵⁹ The inherent agent, energy, or motivation of archival art can be found in a similar line of thought. Namely, the artist as Sisyphus repetitively goes back to the problem of archives, obsesses about doing research on remnants of the past, and produces a counter-archive embracing failed goods and failed documents in our culture and society so that he/she possibly attenuates the pervasive paranoia of any form of semantic perfectionism and completeness. More critically, my arguments shed more light on the positive dimensions and performativity of what archival art does. Archival art driven by the Sisyphean loop could reveal the vulnerable and precarious moments where the utopian promises of certainty and order are being shaken and could eventually lead us to another territory, one where the pleasure of failure is pitted against the cultural dominance of progressiveness.

Perhaps the vision of archival art driven by the Sisyphean loop is mapped out only through an ongoing performance of deconstructing, wandering around, and floating within the archives. This performative process itself is the core concept of my research objective: mapping the Sisyphean archive in contemporary art. In short, mapping the Sisyphean archive is a critical

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 22.

⁵⁹ Cocker, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

tool, indicating an inevitable urgency for artists to rethink, refigure, and revalue the ideas of repetition and failure, through which the existing epistemology towards the archive is doubted and the unexpected clash between disparate, fragmented, and invisible documents from cultural institutions, state organisations, and media is exposed. Mapping the Sisyphean archive turns archives of historical records from the past into an imaginative and open space towards the future by mirroring the paradoxical features of archiving. Ultimately, mapping the Sisyphean archive in a generative light reflects a concern about what the archive can do rather than what it means.

1.2. A VISUAL FORM OF KNOWLEDGE



Figure 1.2.1. George Didi-Huberman, *How to Carry the World on One's Back?*, 2010

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia Madrid

Researchers find gaps in the archive. Carolyn Steedman claims that “historians read for what is not there: the silences and the absences of the documents always speak to us”.⁶⁰ French art historian and curator Georges Didi-Huberman illuminated the unique legacy of art historian Aby Warburg through his crucial exhibition *Atlas: How to Carry the World on One's Back?* at the Museo Nacional Centre de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid in 2010. (Fig. 1.2.1) Warburg was one of the pioneers who sought repetitive reading of archival images through a series of ruptures, failures, and intervals and consequently developed a visual form of knowledge and history based on those extraordinary research methods. Didi-Huberman's exhibition was inspired by Aby Warburg's last project, *Mnemosyne Atlas*, and paid attention to the continued intellectual and aesthetic significance of Warburg's legacies for art in the twentieth and twenty-

⁶⁰ Carolyn Steedman, ‘Something She Called a Fever: Michelet, Derrida and Dust’, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 106, No. 4, October 2001, p. 1177.

first centuries. The method and content of Didi-Huberman's exhibition and its key inspirational source, Warburg's *Atlas*, hint at a methodological clue to my argument, in terms of its awareness of encyclopaedic or archival obsession for researching visual clusters, and will offer an artistic insight into understanding or reconfiguring the images and the world. Above all, as the exhibition demonstrates the rich ground for the current culmination of the archival turn in visual cultures, the visual form of knowledge of both archive makers, Warburg and Didi-Huberman, reflects a sense of mapping the Sisyphean archive. I am also interested in the metaphoric meaning of Atlas, the god in Greek mythology who eternally suffers from holding the heavens on his shoulders because of a punishment from Zeus. This will be an interesting point to be compared with a Sisyphean task.

Aby Warburg's study laid the foundation for a new methodology of art history, "iconography", later extensively developed by Erwin Panofsky. He started to compose an ambitious image atlas work, *Mnemosyne Atlas*, consisting of 79 panels and 2,000 photographs, in his research library in Hamburg. He obsessively arranged and reorganised thousands of visual materials of antiquity, of the Renaissance and, of the twentieth century onto wooden panels, anticipating new relations or affinities among the images. However, Warburg's pictorial atlas was left unfinished at the time of his death in 1929, and as a result, his ultimate vision of it remains enigmatic. Only a set of black and white photographs of panels remains; also, a few of the accompanying introductory texts exist, which provide a partial clue to Warburg's intention. The photographic montage of images and reproductions from newspapers, books, and daily life are affixed to panels covered with black cloth. His graphic representations are categorised under various themes, such as pathos, human sacrifice, and redemption.⁶¹

This massive and fragmentary constellation of images that Warburg wished to achieve is regarded as one of the strangest art historical legacies, a "kaleidoscopic image of the scholar's enigmatic reordering of a lifetime's meditation on the image".⁶² Most of his works are

⁶¹ Dictionary of Art Historians, *Warburg*, [Abraham Moritz] "Aby M", [Online] Available: <https://dictionaryofarthistorians.org/warburga.htm>, Last accessed 20 September 2015.

⁶² Brian Dillon, 'Aby Warburg's Mnemosyne Atlas', *Frieze*, Issue 80, Jan-Feb, 2004, [Online] Available at: http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/collected_works/, Last accessed 19 September 2015.

devoted to social memory and cultural history, especially focusing on the Renaissance period. It can be said that the essence of Warburg's lifetime study is intensely compressed in this series of panels. In the *Atlas*, his interests extended across different times and spaces as retracing and revealing how the classical motifs or language survive, reappear, or are transformed beyond Renaissance art. With this visual approach, he attempted "to map the 'afterlife of antiquity', or how images of great symbolic, intellectual, and emotional power emerge in Western antiquity".⁶³ He believed that, when symbolic images are juxtaposed in a certain sequence, these newly arranged images can foster "synoptic insights" into "the ineffable process of historical change and recurrence" in art and culture.⁶⁴ Hence, *Mnemosyne Atlas* aims to illuminate a visual form of archive to survey European cultural history.⁶⁵

In fact, the pictorial atlas was a widely used format for many fields, such as history, archaeology, cartography, life sciences, anthropology, and psychology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The term "atlas" typically refers to a collection of geographical maps or of image clusters intended to illustrate an abundance of things in a systematic, problematic, or poetic way so that the concept of it ultimately stands for "a visual form of knowledge".⁶⁶ What is remarkable in Warburg's *Atlas* is his method of composing it, which radically changed the way of seeing images at large. His sorting, arranging, and displaying of diverse images and materials from different epochs do not follow the chronological order and linear time scheme of the general archival system. The distinctiveness of Warburg's *Atlas* can be found here. For instance, it is a complex image montage charting the time from the ancient Greek mythology of Helios, to Renaissance artworks with the same motif, and to the contemporary media image of the airship *Zeppelin*.⁶⁷ A range of images jump across the classical myth and modern technology of his time. Most of the fragmentary images are presented without titles, captions,

⁶³ Christopher D. Johnson, 'About the Mnemosyne Atlas', *Mnemosyne: Meanderings through Aby Warburg's Atlas*, Cornell University Library, [Online] Available at: <http://warburg.library.cornell.edu/about>, Last accessed 20 September 2015.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Matthew Rampley, 'Archives of Memory: Walter Benjamin's Arcades Project and Aby Warburg's Mnemosyne Atlas', in Alex Coles (ed.), *De-, Dis-, Ex-: Optic of Walter Benjamin*, Vol 3, Black Dog Publishing, 1999, p. 100.

⁶⁶ Georges Didi-Huberman, 'Atlas: How to Carry the World on One's Back?', in Georges Didi-Huberman (ed.), *Atlas. How to Carry the World on One's Back*, exhibition catalogue, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid 2010.

⁶⁷ Rampley, op. cit., p. 100.

or adequate descriptions. The juxtaposition of heterogeneous visual elements is expected not simply to document the stylistic development of art history but to envisage “its shifting system [or process itself] of spatial and temporal orientation”.⁶⁸ Warburg sought visual representations of the “engram” – mnemonic traces originally termed as such by Richard Semon, in which unexpected encounters and connections of images occur and unconscious memory can be reactivated.⁶⁹ Through such visual intuition or visualisation of history, Warburg wished to trace the social memory embedded in the visual forms, the origin of artistic expression, and the psychological energies driving cultural history.⁷⁰

Didi-Huberman took Warburg’s methodology of the visualisation of history and his insight into images as a point of departure for his exhibition *Atlas: How to Carry the World on One’s Back?* The exhibition encompassed a number of images from reproductions of Warburg’s *Mnemosyne Atlas* to artistic and intellectual investigations by artists, photographers, art historians, scientists, filmmakers, and geographers such as Georges Bataille, Walter Benjamin, Jacob Burckhardt, Guy Debord, Benjamin Fondane, Jean-Luc Godard, Sol LeWitt, Walid Raad, and Gerhard Richter. There were 94 participants in total across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.⁷¹ Instead of exhibiting actual artworks by these practitioners, Didi-Huberman gathered their research, documentary materials, and visual ideas to show a diverse range of artistic procedures and developments. It was, in short, a contemporary version of an atlas of the world designed by Didi-Huberman in an attempt to transcend Warburg. It can be

⁶⁸ Aby Warburg, ‘The Absorption of the Expressive Values of the Past,’ translated by Matthew Rampley, *Art in Translation*, Vol. 1, Issue 2, 2009, p. 274.

⁶⁹ Rampley, op. cit., pp. 104-105.

⁷⁰ Warburg, op. cit., p. 274.

⁷¹ The full list of participants in alphabetical order is as follows: Francesc Abad, Ignasi Abballí, James Agee, Vyacheslav Akhunov, Josef Albers, Alighiero e Boetti, Louis Aragon, Hans Arp, John Baldessari, Georges Bataille, Bernd und Hilla Becher, Ernst Benkard, Marc Bloch, Barbara Bloom, Karl Blossfeldt, Erwin Blumenfeld, Christian Boltanski, Jorge Luis Borges, Brassai, George Brecht, André Breton, Marcel Broodthaers, Stanley Brown, Jacob Burckhardt, Victor Burgin, James Coleman, Pascal Convert, DADACO, Michel Leiris, Salvador Dalí, Moyra Davey, Tacita Dean, Guy Debord, El Lissitzky, Max Ernst, Walker Evans, Harun Farocki, Hans-Peter Feldmann, Robert Filliou, Fischli und Weiss, Alain Fleischer, Benjamin Fondane, Alberto Giacometti, Jean-Luc Godard, Francesco de Goya, Ernst Haeckel, Raymond Hains, Susan Hiller, Roni Horn, Douglas Huebler, Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, Mike Kelley, Paul Klee, John Latham, Zoe Leonard, Sol LeWitt, El Lissitzky, Ghérasim Luca, Piero Manzoni, Étienne-Jules Marey, Ernesto de Martino, Gordon Matta-Clark, Henri Michaux, Laszlo Moholy Nagy, Matt Mullican, Michael Najjar, Bruce Nauman, Dennis Oppenheim, Ulrike Öttinger, Amédée Ozenfant, Jean Painlevé, Giuseppe Penone, Sigmar Polke, Walid Raad (The Atlas Group), Robert Rauschenberg, Man Ray, Gerhard Richter, Arthur Rimbaud, Pedro G. Romero, Charles Ross, Dieter Roth, Thomas Ruff, August Sander, Meyer Schapiro, Stefan Themerson, Rosemarie Trockel, Isidoro Valcárcel Medina, Karl Valentin, Marc Vaux, Jacques Villeglé, Simon Wachsmuth, Franz Erhard Walther, Aby Warburg, Christopher Williams.

thought of as “an atlas of atlases”.⁷² Referring to Warburg’s preference for displaying discontinuous and non-linear time, a broad range of working fields and practices were intermingled at the show. Didi-Huberman claimed that the exhibition was formulated “to understand how certain artists work – beyond the question of any masterpieces – and how this work can be considered from the perspective of an authentic method, and even, a non-standard *transverse knowledge* of our world [original emphasis]”.⁷³ He placed emphasis on the imaginative, performative working methods and processes by which the unique energy of images is articulated and the essence of eccentric creativity for masterpieces is encapsulated. I want to emphasise that Didi-Huberman’s atlas served to map the processes rather than present the final sets of outcomes.

Didi-Huberman’s *Atlas* consisted of four main sections – “At the montage table”, “Piecing together the order of things”, “Piecing together the order of places”, and “Piecing together the order of time”. What significantly enriched the flow of these sections is the concept of a montage of heterogeneous images. Unexpectedly juxtaposed images following the interdisciplinary itinerary reinvented the order of things, times, and places. For Didi-Huberman, an image never exists in a singular format but as a plural unity, which is always relative and temporary.⁷⁴ Their unusual encounters in specific contexts could reconfigure, dismantle, and challenge the original boundaries or configurations. By mapping the world through disassembled and reassembled images, a panoramic archive of visual knowledge is produced.

Didi-Huberman’s curatorial approach not only reflects a method of mapping but also encompasses avant-garde art practices, featuring a way of mapping as a performance, documentation, and repetition. Particularly in the 1960s and the 1970s, many conceptual artists started to engage with the subject of the map as a representational form of imagery, gradually exploring the idea of maps as contested grounds for certain actions and mapping as a processual and documental tool. Among the exhibited artists in Didi-Huberman’s show, perhaps the one

⁷² Teresa Castro, ‘Atlas. How to Carry the World on One’s Back?’ *NECSUS European Journal of Media Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring 2012, Amsterdam University Press, p. 194.

⁷³ Didi-Huberman, *op. cit.*

⁷⁴ Pedro de Llano, ‘Atlas: How to Carry the World on One’s Back?’, *Afterall*, review, 25 May 2011, [Online] Available at: http://www.afterall.org/online/atlas-how-to-carry-the-world-on-one-s-back#.VgZ5oBN_NBd, Last accessed 23 September 2015.

best-known to use maps in their work is Alighiero e Boetti. His *Mappa* series used a map of the world and its associated motifs in the form of embroideries wherein countries are shown with the design of their flag inside their borders. Boetti's roughly 150 maps reflect how geographical boundaries and political realities formed and changed between 1971 and 1994.⁷⁵ Marcel Broodthaers also used world maps for his works with a minimum of intervention and gesture. He made a series of map works by slightly altering the dimensions of certain countries or adding words on to existing maps. For instance, in his work entitled *Carte du Monde Poétique* (1968), Broodthaers revised the printed name of the commercial map, "Carte du Monde Politique", replacing the letters 'li' with an 'é'.⁷⁶ These works by both Boetti and Broodthaers imply that all standardised maps are in fact based on selective and subjective representations, which can be simplified and distorted.⁷⁷ Above all, they see the map as a site for storytelling about political conflict, as well as for social and cultural networks across the globe.

More crucially, a founding member of the Situationist International, Guy Debord, invented the concepts of the *dérive* and psychogeography, which are directly connected to the mapping of urban environments. Debord resisted the statistical and functional sensibility of urban planning, defining psychogeography as "the study of the specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organised or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals".⁷⁸ The related concept *dérive* (drifting) is "a mode of experimental behaviour linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances".⁷⁹ Debord's theoretical study of such concepts was embodied in his piece *Situationist Map of Paris* (1957), in which fragmentary and arbitrary pieces of a map representing the districts of the French capital are scattered and connected by red arrows.⁸⁰ The

⁷⁵ Ruth Watson, 'Mapping and Contemporary Art', *The Cartographic Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 4, November 2009, p. 297.

⁷⁶ Manuel J. Borja-Villel and Christophe Cherix, 'I Am Not a Filmmaker: Notes on a Retrospective', in exhibition catalogue, *Marcel Broodthaers: A Retrospective*, New York: The Museum of Modern Art and Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2016, p. 19.

⁷⁷ Deborah Schultz, *Marcel Broodthaers: Strategy and Dialogue*, Bern and Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007, p. 202.

⁷⁸ Guy Debord, 'Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography', 1955, in Ken Knabb (ed.), *Situationist International Anthology*, Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006, p. 8.

⁷⁹ Guy Debord, 'Definitions', 1958, in Ken Knabb (ed.), *Situationist International Anthology*, Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006, p. 62.

⁸⁰ Denis Cosgrove, 'Maps, Mapping, Modernity: Art and Cartography in the Twentieth Century', *Imago Mundi*, Vol. 57, No. 1, 2005, p.40.

unplanned and playful *dérive* in Situationist mapping anticipated pedestrians to have unexpected encounters and connections with other individuals around the city. The psychogeographical thought behind Situationism undermined the mastering and omniscient vision of the urban map and actively broadened the spaces of the art world into the urban spaces of everyday life.

Conceptual artists, less interested in social issues than the Situationists, focused on “the processes of mapping” as theoretical methodologies of performance and documentation.⁸¹

Originally as a sculptor and later as a conceptual artist, Douglas Huebler experimented with documentation of the sculpture, frequently combining various types of maps and photographic images. His *Site Sculpture Projects* (1968) mapped out a range of sites around American cities, documenting their performative processes, aimed at redefining the concept of sculpture.⁸²

Huebler stated: “The existence of each sculpture is documented by its documentation. The documentation takes the form of photographs, maps, drawings and descriptive languages.”⁸³

For Huebler, maps are a useful, strategic medium used to create distance from traditional aesthetics.⁸⁴ Similarly, rejecting the commercialisation of art, land artists created works using the materials of the earth at sites beyond the gallery walls. Land artists (not specified in Didi-Huberman’s exhibition however) intervened in the landscape and documented their frequently temporary and immaterial works or performances using maps and photographs. As their works often disappeared afterwards, they simply marked the location of their ritual-like performance on a map for documentation. For example, Richard Long in his *A Hundred Mile Walk* (1971-1972) presented a Dartmoor map with one circular mark in which he repeatedly walked, following the circular route, in order to record the sounds he heard.⁸⁵

One of Huebler’s contemporaries, Sol Lewitt, was also interested in documenting his surroundings with photography and the use of maps for his early works. Lewitt’s artist books, mainly published in the 1970s and 1980s, are a kind of graphic map cataloguing snapshots of

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 41.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Douglas Huebler, *November 1968*, New York: Seth Siegelau, 1968, n.p.

⁸⁴ Cosgrove, op. cit., p. 41.

⁸⁵ Tate, ‘Richard Long: A Hundred Mile Walk (1971-2)’, *Gallery Label*, February 2010, [Online] Available at: <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/long-a-hundred-mile-walk-t01720>, Last accessed 1 December 2017.

daily objects and environments such as file drawers, window grates, doors, manhole covers, fences, and light fixtures, presented in a grid format. He even documented his walk from his house in Montelucio to the town of Spoleto in Italy. Lewitt's psychogeographical journey too was mapped in the format of a photo-grids book, which compiled the landscapes of skies, streets, and walls.⁸⁶ These repetitive collages that map daily encounters by Huebler and Lewitt suggest that the seemingly static and unified surface of the world on the map is, conversely, fragmentary, indefinite, and multiple in actuality.

In short, serving as a paradigmatic lens cast upon preceding experiments with maps in art, Didi-Huberman's exhibition, *Atlas: How to Carry the World on One's Back?* reflects on mapping as a method for navigational documentation, as a processual performance, and as a repetitive assemblage of images.

Again, Didi-Huberman's curatorial mapping of images unfolds in the form of an atlas. Didi-Huberman writes in his catalogue essay:

The atlas gives us an Übersicht in its discontinuities, an exposition of differences, where the archive drowns the differences in a volume that cannot be exposed to sight. [...] The atlas offers us panoramic tables where the archive forces us first of all to get lost among the boxes. The atlas shows us the trajectories of survival in the interval of images, whereas the archive as not yet made such intervals in the thickness of its volumes, in piles or in bundles. There would of course be no atlas possible without the archive that precedes it; the atlas offers in this sense the 'becoming-sight' and 'becoming-knowledge' of the archive.⁸⁷

It can be noted that he is concerned with the advanced capacity of images within the format of the atlas as compared to the other forms of knowledge production and accumulation: the encyclopaedia and the archive. He seems to place more weight on the function of the atlas that could effectively activate "the interval of images" although admitting that the atlas entails the intimate relations with those images. However, Teresa Castro points out that the exhibited works at the show did not always make crystal-clear distinctions among the categories of atlas,

⁸⁶ Sol Lewitt, *From Montelucio to Spoleto/ December 1976*, Eindhoven: Van Abbemuseum, 1984.

⁸⁷ Didi-Huberman, op. cit., cited in Teresa Castro, op. cit., p. 196.

encyclopaedia, and archives.⁸⁸ In the same sense, many art productions driven by collecting; sorting; and arranging images, objects, or texts tend to build their own forms of visual collections, free from such categories and to explore the revolutionary working method of a visual montage, transformed from one format to another. From Didi-Huberman's perspective, the *Atlas* is "a synoptic presentation" of discontinuous and different image themes, which becomes "an infinite archive" that obtains its meaning through the concept of montage.⁸⁹ The viewer repeatedly gets lost, fails to grasp a coherent whole, and confronts unfamiliar relations within this infinite and discontinuous archive.

Above all, the intervals, breaks, and ruptures of images are constantly thrown up to be the "becoming-sight and becoming-knowledge of the archive", as Didi-Huberman emphasises. This reflects what Warburg calls the "iconology of the interval", an art of in-between.⁹⁰ It is not just a void but a meaningful gap. Such gaps emerging from the unusual ties of images (or exhibited works) give viewers an active position to read between the images and interlink with remote lines. By extension, it is the creative capacities or possibilities for one to research the latent meanings and narratives within the archive that make the past reappear anew again and again through the juxtaposition, appropriation, and repetition of images. The sequence of disparate visual materials in different contexts simply refuses to present a linear, monolithic, and settled narrative, but rather, it embraces the polyphonic narratives repetitively unveiled through the collisions of heterogeneous elements and linkages of the silent gaps across the show. The exhibition was a sophisticated project that experimented with the use of visual montage as a tool of intellectual inquiry and as a communicative medium. In addition, with such an approach, it mapped out a new topography of contemporary art, i.e. archivally driven art from the 1960s to the early 2000s, while eminently revealing the contemporary significance of Warburg's art historical methodology. This is the curatorial insights that reflects a contemporary archival art scene where the trivial details of everyday or localised events are weighed more than the grand narratives, the performative process of art production and its

⁸⁸ Castro, op. cit.

⁸⁹ Didi-Huberman, op. cit., p. 14.

⁹⁰ Dillon, op. cit.

procedural conditions are more valued, and a range of new media is fluidly combined so that the multi-layered qualities of media are more witnessed.⁹¹

Meanwhile, we can compare an underlying meaning of the atlas with Sisyphus' story. The image of an atlas was originally a form of visual compendium aiming for completeness or thoroughness to represent the scientific objectivity of certain specialised knowledge. The term "atlas" is derived from the Greek mythology of Atlas, who was forced to hold the heavens standing at the western edge of the Earth. Atlas is thus often described as an enduring being who bears the globe on his shoulders in art and literature. Because of this iconographical imagery, the Atlas myth alludes to an unsurpassable and ungraspable knowledge and wisdom of the whole world. Interestingly, his eternal suffering is reminiscent of the Sisyphean task of rolling a rock uphill and failing to reach the goal again and again. Both mythologies suggest a kind of failing gesture to reveal the impossibility of complete closure or the perfect thoroughness of things, times, and places, and this impossibility that was visually evoked in Warburg and Didi-Huberman's atlases have already been explored. Warburg's *Atlas* respecting multiplicity and heterogeneity echoes the notion that the world exists as fragmentations and that cultural memory and history are only built upon a shifting chain of fragmented residues. With regard to this point, Aleida Assmann argues that the media of cultural memory have been shifted "from texts to traces". Memory was once typically defined in terms of "inscription and storage", while the new historical consciousness perceives memory as "erasure, destruction, gaps, and forgetfulness".⁹² Therefore, the mnemonic traces inherently entail forgetting as well as remembering so that restoring the past through traces is always inevitably fragmented.⁹³ This failure of the complete restoration of memory makes the past foreign, which allows some room for an imaginative historical narrative, not a definitive history as a truthful discourse.

Perhaps the fact that Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas* remains unfinished may have a more significant implication today. Warburg can be regarded as Sisyphus as a researcher, who never

⁹¹ Sumi Kang, 'The Order of Heterotopia: W. Benjamin and the Archive based Contemporary Art', translated from Korean by myself, *Aesthetics*, Vol. 78, The Korean Society of Aesthetics, June 2014, p. 19.

⁹² Aleida Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 196-197.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

stopped seeking traces of cultural memory unveiled through fleeting pictorial relations. Warburg was the person who believed that there was a certain mnemonic origin embedded in images so that it would be fully displayed at a certain point in his research. But, his optimistic presupposition of or belief in the certainty of mnemonic origin grasped in visual images seems to be etiolated by the emergence of the multimedia image environment today. The genuine value of his goal may be credited to its ongoing journey, not to its destination. When working with his *Atlas*, Warburg performed a repetitive process of mounting and dismounting the moving panels and, in turn, transformed the scholarly archive into a mobile artwork.⁹⁴ This enigma of the open-ended project now becomes an endless reference to many art historians, curators, and artists, for whom Warburg's panels are still moving towards another story. Didi-Huberman extends the contemporary meaning of the atlas into becoming-knowledge of an infinite archive, applying Warburg's idiosyncratic visualisation of art history. To sum up, a certain way of mapping the Sisyphean loop is glimpsed from these two atlases, going back to the residues from the past, recognising constant failures to reflect the intact past, and turning the historical archive into a prospective archive to be added and transformed endlessly. Didi-Huberman's reinterpretation hints at a methodological framework to understand the properties and conditions of contemporary archival art. Archival art, which I define as a visual form of knowledge production, is in favour of discontinuity, heterogeneity, otherness, and fragmentation that spark new analogies or trajectories of thought.

Hal Foster observes that there is "the will to connect what cannot be connected in archival art"⁹⁵ and that it turns "excavation sites" into "construction sites".⁹⁶ Along a similar line of thought, I sense that current archival art is more radically concerned with a constant process of deconstruction and reconstruction of the existing frames. If I name it Sisyphean archival art, the archival failure of linearity and objectivity and its precarious position between order and disorder are dramatically exposed so that a repetitive cycle of recalling the past and filling the gaps never halts within it. This loop can sometimes head to extreme directions.

⁹⁴ Dillon, op. cit.

⁹⁵ Foster, op. cit., p. 21.

⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 21-22.

Assuming that the archive continuously includes additional documents, it would then become everything in the end. In other words, this infinite openness threatens the existence of the archive itself, which is eventually anarchival. This type of paradoxical performativity of the archive is inherent, featured as two sides of the same coin. The archive is maintained between openness and finitude, between order and disorder, and is built upon the basic premise of remembering and forgetting. The precarious tension of being archival and anarchival is a vantage point from which more profoundly ambivalent thoughts on the elements of repetition and failure acted out in archival art can be cultivated. Here, archival destruction and creativity are conducted by a repetitive force that is pathological, self-destructive yet generative, and kaleidoscopic at the same time, while an archival failure is voluntarily introduced as something undone, deferred, detoured yet experimental, playful, and performative. In my own atlas of Sisyphean archival art, the loop of repetition and failure swaying over artists' modus operandi will be elaborated and its critical terrain will continue to be drawn out in Chapter 2 and 3.

1.3. ARCHIVAL/ANARCHIVAL IMPULSE: REPETITION AND FAILURE

Archival Paradox

The boundaries of the archive are shifting and becoming transformable because of its paradoxical features. The word “anarchival” implies multi-layered meanings pertaining to the complicated, dynamic relationships of conflicting archival natures as such. Looking at the traditional process of archiving in general, we see that the archive is built on the privileging premise of selecting and discarding stuff and can be vulnerably exposed to physical disappearance caused by any catastrophe, chemical contamination, or degradation from the passing of time. The archive thus already bears some aspects of the anarchival. Basically, the prefix “ana-”, which is a Greek word, means “up and upwards”, “back and against”, and “again and anew”.⁹⁷ In this regard, the online magazine *Mnemoscape*, dealing with the anarchival impulse as the main topic for its first issue, defines the “anarchival impulse” in contemporary archival art as three major implications: (1) destruction, (2) subversion, and (3) regeneration.⁹⁸ When a violent sense of artistic methodologies, protocols, or language paradoxically deconstructs what is preserved, the anarchival impulse is more inclined to destroy the archive. More radically, while some artistic attempts lead to a permanent change or subversion of the archival logic and function in an anarchic manner, others regenerate the newly emerged archival narratives or meanings as an open-ended, potential state yet to come.⁹⁹ The semantic fields of those definitions are fluidly intersected and oscillate according to contexts, and I suggest that the instability of the concept of the anarchival impulse can be attributed to the energy of repetition and failure.

⁹⁷ *Oxford Dictionaries Language Matter*, [Online] Available at:

<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/ana->, Last accessed 24 August 2015.

⁹⁸ Elisa Adami and Alessandra Ferrini, ‘Editorial: The Anarchival Impulse,’ *Mnemoscape*, Issue no. 2, March 2015, [Online] Available at: <http://www.mnemoscape.org/#!Editorial-%E2%80%93-The-Anarchival-Impulse/c1sp5/91E9D98D-2F40-4F98-9A22-0C1FBA4125D2>, Last accessed 22 October 2015.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

To understand how archival art visualises the subtle borders of being archival and anarchival, the conflicting yet co-existing natures that archives entail need to be explored first. The exhibition and publication project titled *Deep Storage: Collecting, Storing, and Archiving in Art* (1998–1999) is one of the cases that especially took notice of a diverse spectrum of archival paradoxes visualised within art practices, as observing the importance of collecting and archiving as a major contemporary artistic strategy. This joint project of travelling exhibitions held in both Germany and America and the subsequent catalogue publication featured important artworks by 40 artists from the 1960s to the late twentieth century and essays by 25 authors. Three particular paradoxical aspects of archiving (collecting) are addressed by Matthias Winzen, one of the co-curators, in his catalogue essay. First, there is a desire to exchange uncertain, unavailable, and unpredictable time in the future for available material in the act of collecting.¹⁰⁰ This can be seen as a defensive act to compensate for the fear of loss and as a corresponding attempt to transfer the uncertain immateriality of times yet to come into available physicality in the present moment. Second, the unique, individual characteristics of the item is inevitably reduced or taken away once it is filed amongst other similar objects in the collection. This leads to “the paradox of the similar dissimilar” through an archival process of order and coherence.¹⁰¹ The third paradox is “protective destruction”. To transplant the specific items into institutional collections in the name of preservation or protection, many activities involved in archaeological excavation often move items out of their original context or previous use. This can be regarded as an act of damaging, diminishing, and destroying.¹⁰²

Such paradoxes, namely material reward for uncertainty, similar dissimilarity, and protective destruction are inevitably embedded in the process of collecting and archiving as Winzen points out. His comment on the archival paradoxes again supports the viewpoint that the existence of archives intrinsically lies at the border of contradictory attributes – remembering and forgetting, ordering and disordering, including and excluding, and preserving

¹⁰⁰ Matthias Winzen, ‘Collecting – So Normal, So Paradoxical’, in Ingrid Schaffner and Matthias Winzen (eds.), *Deep Storage: Collecting, Storing, and Archiving in Art*, Prestel, 1998, p. 22.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 24.

and destroying. Some artists maximise the paradoxical aspects of the archive while others suggest alternative archives to minimise these double-sided conditions of the archive in their practices. According to Winzen, in the artistic treatment of such paradoxes, artists tend to collect trivial things that become exceptional, to collect things without destroying, and to integrate death into life in a collection by looking into the future rather than hoarding materials as symbolic remedies against death.¹⁰³

For instance, the work *Waste Not* (2005-2012) (Fig. 1.3.1) by Chinese artist Song Dong (b. 1966) demonstrates how archival art deals with the archival paradoxes in this sense.¹⁰⁴ This work has been exhibited in Europe, Asia, and the United States since 2005. It is a massive everyday archive of thousands of daily objects that the artist's mother, Zhao Xiangyuan collected during her lifetime. In Zhao's collection of daily objects, all types of household utensils, such as toiletries, shopping bags, oil flasks, blankets, clothes, books, dolls, shoes, and other items are presented in rows. Along with these assembled materials, there is also the wooden frame of a traditional Chinese house standing in the centre of the scene. Her collection of used objects appears to include nothing of any commercial value and some of it can be regarded as mere rubbish in everyday life. The collection of empty tubes of toothpaste, legless dolls, heaps of used bottles, and 4 television sets is indeed "the residue of 50 years of a person's life".¹⁰⁵ Through her obsessive passion for collecting and her son's artistic inspiration, a pile of trivial belongings becomes an exceptional form of a personal and family history.

¹⁰³ Ibid., pp. 27-31.

¹⁰⁴ The descriptions and analyses of Song Dong's *Waste Not* are edited from my MA dissertation titled "Art Begins Where the Tiny Bit Begins": Speculation on the Productive Value of Everyday Life as a Polyphonic Archive with Reference to Mikhail Bakhtin's Particularities of a Daily Event, awarded by Goldsmiths, University of London in 2009, pp. 7-10.

¹⁰⁵ Heike Gatzmaga, 'Between Conservation and Change', An interview by the author with the artist in February 2008, *The International Artist Database*, [Online], Available at: <http://www.culturebase.net/artist.php?1290>, Last accessed 23 December 2016.

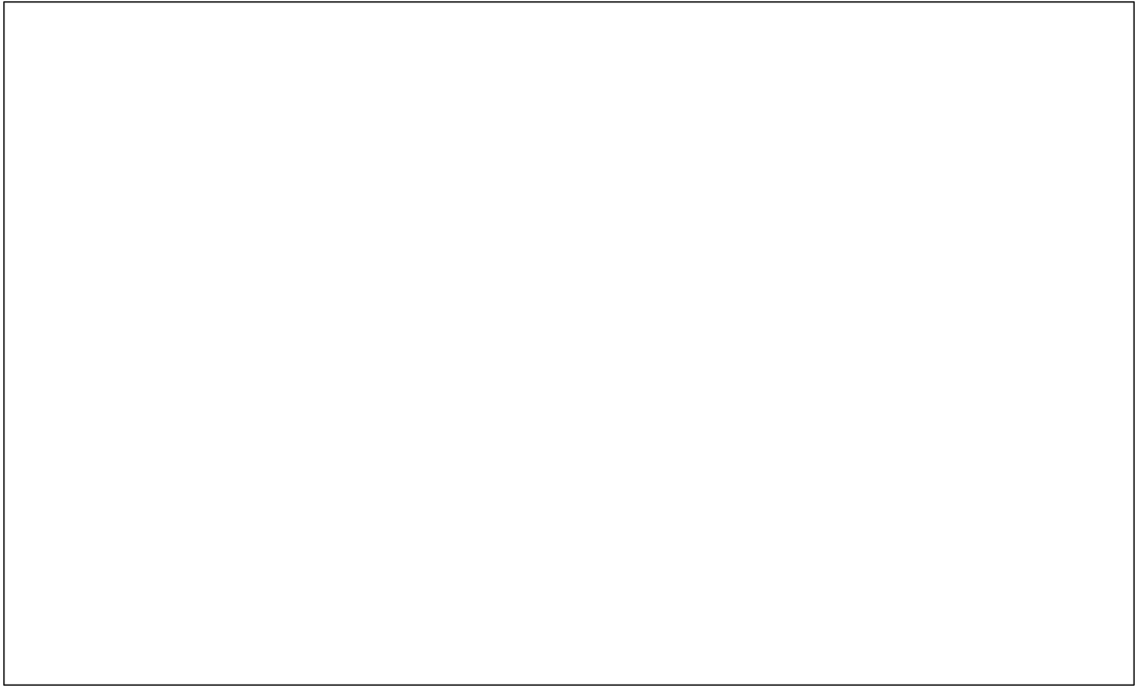


Figure 1.3.1. Song Dong, *Waste Not*, 2012, Barbican Art Gallery London

Zhao was born in a wealthy family in 1938 and lived in Beijing. However, after her father and grandfather were accused of anti-Communist activity, the family was forced to live in poverty, so she tried to keep everything and did not throw anything away.¹⁰⁶ According to Song Dong, his mother's possessiveness became more intense when her husband died in 2002.¹⁰⁷ It was as if she was attempting to cope with her loss by hoarding; this was a type of retrospective gesture to grasp her memory against the loss of her absent family. This collection is Song Dong's family history based on his mother's lifelong obsession. Each single object acts as an index to jolt the memory and the panoramic scene of everyday material seems to imply traces of plural times left within itself. It is also interesting that this personal history, which was accomplished by individual collecting acts, reveals aspects of a common life in half a century of Chinese culture. In general, those of older generations, like Song Dong's mother, had grown up in poverty and could not afford to waste the few resources they had, having to recycle and

¹⁰⁶ Holland Cotter, 'The Collected Ingredients of a Beijing Life', *The New York Times*, Art Review, July 14, 2009, [Online] Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/15/arts/design/15song.html?8dpc>, Last accessed 30 October 2015.

¹⁰⁷ Gatzmaga, op. cit.

save them for the family. Thus, Zhao's real-life collection, *Waste Not*, as exhibited by her son, is evidence not only of her thrifty life but also a reflection of ordinary mothers' lives during difficult times in China. Holland Cotter in *The New York Times* admires this work, noting that "it is at once a record of a life, a history of a half-century of Chinese vernacular culture, and a symbolic archive of impermanence".¹⁰⁸

Song Dong's family collection would have remained merely a pointlessly compulsive hoarding to substitute for the absence of the dead father if the artist himself had not transformed it into a piece of artwork. As a result, the fact that other family members participate in exhibiting this ongoing project together not only commemorates their family's own history but also continuously creates prospective meanings and contexts of what would otherwise have been a collection of rubbish, narrating towards the future. The repetitive and paranoid disposition of obsessive archival art like Song Dong's gives the worthless and the overlooked exceptional attention. While conventional archives always represent particular objects or subjects within a fixed category, artistic archives often collect and archive trivial and unnoticed items.¹⁰⁹ In fact, there are unusual motivations, non-hierarchical categories, and original expression in artistic archives. By virtue of collecting and archiving, "the transformation from worthless and overlooked to unique and notable"¹¹⁰ occurs in this visual form of personal, family residues, which is a reverse of the general mechanism of archiving. The typical archival functions, as Winzen explains, are being reversed here.

Repetition

While walking through endless rows of ordinary fragments from the past in Song Dong's *Waste Not*, the viewers may have felt as though they were going back to the real past. The repetitive rhythms of the thousands of displayed objects could create an illusion of the past as it was, but we should remember that it merely mirrors its traces. In fact, it may be more appropriate to say that *Waste Not*, in the gallery space, regenerates different stories made and re-made through

¹⁰⁸ Cotter, op. cit.

¹⁰⁹ Ernst van Alphen, 'Archival Obsessions and Obsessive Archives', in Holly and Smith (eds.), op. cit., 2008, p. 78.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 79.

unexpected encounters between viewers and the exhibited fragments and it newly obtains its contemporary meaning of Chinese social and cultural aspects and its aesthetic value in a broader context. It is important to realise that archives can only be a substitute for traceable memory but not the past per se. Archives, as it were, contain only a trace of what happened there, not the thing itself. In relation to this, Derrida raises a more fundamental question about the inherent archival paradox in *Archive Fever*. He remarks on the intrinsic instability of the historical archive, stating that “the archive takes places at the place of originary and structural breakdown of the said memory”.¹¹¹ His claim indicates the ironic feature of the archive that slips away from its primary objective, i.e. to preserve the past. The archive, despite its association with capturing the past, in actuality only exists so that we may compensate for the loss of memory.

If the archival project is not about digging up the past and memory as it was, what is it then seeking? Paradoxically, Derrida associates the archive with the future:

The question of the archive is not, we repeat, a question of the past. [...] It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow. The archive: if we want to know what that will have meant, we will only know in times to come.¹¹²

This passage suggests that an archive is a project of seeking the upcoming potential of the future rather than looking back at the origins of the past. For Derrida, the archive is always bound up with this paradox between the repetitive failure to grasp the past itself and the affirmation of the future to come. Hence, it can be said that the archive is simultaneously a closed place to shelter the past and an open page to inscribe the future.

French artist Christian Boltanski (b. 1944) visualises this archival paradox in his work. He often plays on the contrast between the fallibility of human memory and institutional archives that are believed to convey an objective record of the past.¹¹³ He once created a

¹¹¹ Derrida, op. cit., p. 11.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 36.

¹¹³ James Putnam, *Art and Artifact: The Museum as Medium*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2009, p. 43.

fictional archive installation of the Carnegie International at the Mattress Factory in 1991. As part of the exhibition, 5,632 cardboard boxes in total were installed in the narrow space from floor to ceiling. Each box was labelled with the names of artists whose works appeared in 51 nations, but some boxes were empty to leave room for future artists.¹¹⁴ This overpowering effect of the stacked boxes oscillates between the different time passages of the past, present, and future simultaneously. The fact that some boxes are filled with archival materials and the others are empty for future filling suggestively reveals “fragments of history that are half imagined, half probable”.¹¹⁵ In Derrida’s sense, Boltanski’s visual form of a past-present-future archive reveals that the condition of the archive cannot produce a finitude, but rather, its finite desire is endlessly deferred. Derrida amplifies this view by adding that “the archivist produces more archive, and that is why the archive is never closed. It opens out of the future.”¹¹⁶

More significantly, with this archival direction of prospective nature, Derrida highlights that there is a fatal power of “repetition” in the archive. From Derrida’s deconstructive point of view, the paradoxical nature of the future-oriented archive resides in the mechanism of repetition at the root. The anarchival operates through repetition. He argues:

How can we think about this fatal repetition, about repetition in general in its relationship to memory and the archive? It is easy to perceive, if not to interpret, the necessity of such a relationship, at least if one associates the archive, as naturally one is always tempted to do, with repetition, and repetition with the past. But it is the future that is at issue here, and the archive as an irreducible experience of the future.¹¹⁷

The overarching element of repetition in the archive is a key concept in Derrida’s theory of archives. He discusses the logic of the archive as “archive fever” in light of the Freudian concept of the “death drive” and argues that the archive and psychoanalysis itself are inextricably tied up with the archive fever: a returning force back to the very first moment. In a

¹¹⁴ Mattress Factory, *Christian Boltanski Archives of the Carnegie International, 1896-1991* (1991), [Online] Available at: <http://www.mattress.org/index.cfm?event=ShowArtist&eid=21&id=247&c=>, Last accessed 23 May 2015.

¹¹⁵ Lisa Le Feuvre, ‘Present Possibilities – The Work of Josiah McElheny’, in *Josiah McElheny, The Past was a Mirage I’d Left Far Behind*, exhibition catalogue, Whitechapel Gallery, 2012, p. 19.

¹¹⁶ Derrida, op. cit., p.68.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

Freudian sense, the death drive is a self-destructive drive, contradicting even the preservation drive, returning to the state before one's birth:

... if there is no archive without consignment in an external place which assures the possibility of memorization, of repetition, of reproduction, or of reimpression, then we must also remember that repetition itself, the logic of repetition, indeed the repetition compulsion, remains, according to Freud, indissociable from the death drive. And thus from destruction.¹¹⁸

That is to say, the archive works against itself, destroying the archival memory and inciting amnesia. Akira Mizuta Lippit rephrases this notion by stating that every archive is dreamed of as a total archive, but the dream of any archive is haunted by the fantasy of its destruction. At the end of the archive is its ruin, the *anarchive*.¹¹⁹ Derrida attributes this *anarchivic* or *archiviolitic* qualification to the inherent drive of the archive; it destroys its own archive but never leaves any traces, always silently working against itself.¹²⁰ This archival sickness that he names archive fever is a compulsive drive indicating both anarchival aggression and the feverish desire for origins. So to speak, in every archive, the pathological rhythms of repetition run forcefully, but its desire to return to the absolute origin always fails. Nevertheless, this cycle starts all over again. For Derrida, the feverish desire to recover the origins or beginnings in the archive is never reached and the desire for its closure is never fulfilled. This is why he sees the real value of the doomed archival hope in the future, not in the past.

Perhaps this conflictive condition is essential for the functioning of the archive, sustained by the dialectic of the archival and anarchival impulse. It could raise an interesting question on how the tension between the desire for stability on one hand and openness (or precariousness) on the other simultaneously runs in the archive and how change can be transformed into a futuristic creativity. Similarly, Hal Foster briefly explains the anarchival impulse in archival art in his "An Archival Impulse". He argues that a certain type of archival art can be described more precisely as anarchival because it is "concerned less with absolute

¹¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 11-12.

¹¹⁹ Akira Mizuta Lippit, 'The World Archive and Universal Research', in Holly and Smith (eds.), op. cit., p. 185.

¹²⁰ Derrida, op. cit., p. 10.

origins than with obscure traces [...] these artists are often drawn to unfulfilled beginnings or incomplete projects – in art and in history alike – that might offer points of departure again”.¹²¹ Foster takes note of the rootless, unsettled, and open-ended movement of archival art that has drifted far from the original departure. I observe that, driven by such an anarchival impulse, some artists contest with a trapped vision of the archives in which the impossible dream of hunting down the past and of archiving everything for a total unity of memories repetitively runs in a pathological or destructive sense. In the meantime, others perform eccentric yet creative practices to suggest that an archival structure is open-ended and unbounded by freely encountered elements from outside and differences are made and continually remade in a generative sense. In my view, the anarchival impulse is not always subversive destruction but sets a kind of precondition for the creation and regeneration of the next steps in the future.

Failure

Besides the mechanism of repetition, any failing moments, errors, flaws, and anomalies in the archival system are also other significant features of the anarchival impulse. When the unusual and irregular rhythms are introduced in the archive or when what is to be preserved already speaks for something severely disoriented, devastated, traumatic, or abnormal, the typically balanced, organised rhythms of the archive are shaken. As a result, “the alteration, malfunction, rupture, or functional disorder of a system” breaks the rigid power of symbolic order and triggers “a rhythmical failure” in it.¹²² As creative failure, artists often voluntarily produce rhythmical failures in their own reworked archives, questioning “[its] archaeological logic by introducing error”.¹²³ In archival art, failures can denote dissatisfaction, rejection, doubt, error, incompetence, purposelessness, or experiment, through which official and linear stories or histories written are tested again and again. The series of failures helps dismantle the

¹²¹ Foster, op. cit., p.5.

¹²² Eirini Grigoriadou, ‘The Pathological Rhythm of the Archive’, *Mnemoscape*, Issue no.2, March 2015, [Online] Available at: <http://www.mnemoscape.org/#!ethnographic-terminalia---after-the-bure/c2n8>, Last accessed 22 August 2015.

¹²³ Foster, op. cit., p. 174.

normalised archival rhythms and unlock an archival lacuna or hole in time and space for a creation.¹²⁴

Ilya Kabakov (b. 1933), the Russian-American conceptual artist, gives us an interesting example and a tenable answer to the speculations on this issue. His works explore the problematic concept of archives, frequently within fictional museum installations. In his installation *Sixteen Ropes* (1984) (Fig. 1.3.2), 16 ropes at eye level suspended numerous pieces of garbage, from cigarette butts to wrappers, scraps of paper, and rail tickets, all labelled with written words such as “Look what we took out of the library!” and “We’ll read it this evening.” The fragments of objects and attached explanatory texts line up in the grid of the horizontal ropes and vertical strings as if the historical archive were “strung up”, as in the ancient form of filing.¹²⁵ Assuming that those pieces, dangling in a row, metaphorically visualise a series of events that happened in the past, each rope could be a storyline for telling a coherent narrative with a sense of historical time. What Kabakov’s installation implies here is “the problem of [our] historical awareness” based on the archival system.¹²⁶

Through its physical format, *Sixteen Ropes* appears as a linear and monolithic structure. Each object caught in the archive is a randomly chosen piece of trash, chosen specifically so that it cannot deliver any sense of comprehensible meaning or feedback. The written labels attached to the objects are merely telling the viewers nonsense in an arbitrary way, which means that the indexical words fail to connect the object through palpable descriptions. Spieker describes this work as follows: “instead of turning into correlatives of history, the items in the installation remain what they are, garbage”.¹²⁷ Furthermore, the interval between the object and the object of the rope in his archive implies that only great events from countless human activities during a specific period are chosen to be in the canonical mainstream of stories. However, precisely because of the pauses caused by these intervals, the natural flow of the rope is constantly cut and interrupted so that its continuum is being disturbed again and again.

¹²⁴ Grigoriadou, op. cit.

¹²⁵ Spieker, op. cit., pp. ix-x.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p.xi.

¹²⁷ Ibid., pp. xii-xiii.

Kabakov's ropes dramatise the discontinuous rhythms of archival failures, ruptures, and malfunction, suggesting that a sense of archival history as a meaningfully organised composite and a solid belief in chronological consciousness could be inaccurate, precarious, and unstable.



Figure 1.3.2. Ilya Kabakov, *Sixteen Ropes*, 1986/2012, Exhibition View, Van Abbemuseum

Foucault's thoughts on the archive and history are a timely reminder of the problem of archival linearity. Foucault asserts that the archive is "the law of what can be said".¹²⁸ It is impossible for us to describe our own archive at the present time since the archive is the very thing that gives it "its mode of appearance and existence, and its system of accumulation, historicity, and disappearance" so that it is "outside ourselves, delimits us".¹²⁹ Thus, defining the archive as a totality or a single entity here and now is an already fallible attempt. It is necessary for us to be separated from the archive in chronological time distance for it to be

¹²⁸ Foucault, op. cit., p. 145.

¹²⁹ Ibid. pp. 146-147.

analysed more sharply.¹³⁰ In Foucault's method, the analysis of the archive at a distance is the way in which our identity and history as discursive practices are defined and variations of statements in the different categories of discourses should be sought to undermine totality and finitude and to question the recovery of origin. He claims that history consists of the discontinuities that highlight ambiguity, fragmentation, and struggle as Kabakov's *Sixteen Ropes* partly visualises. These aspects undermine history as one unity, as ruptures and transformations continually throw up "new foundations". Foucault argues:

And the great problem [...] is not how continuities are established, how a single pattern is formed and preserved, how for so many different, successive minds there is a single horizon, what mode of action and what substructure is implied by the interplay of transmissions, resumptions, disappearances, and repetitions, how the origin may extend its sway well beyond itself to that conclusion that is never given – the problem is no longer one of tradition, of tracing a line, but one of division, of limits; it is no longer one of lasting foundations, but one of *transformations* that serve as *new foundations*, [...] how is one to specify the different concepts that enable us to conceive of *discontinuity* (threshold, rupture, break, mutation, transformation)? [...] [my emphasis]¹³¹

There is always the question of the rupturing and halting of time within archives. A rupture is where something new continuously emerges from the temporal discontinuities of the archival source. If we take this to be the case, then writing history based on archived records may also induce misunderstanding, misfires, inaccuracy, and failure.

Both Derrida and Foucault's critiques provide an essential insight into how the traditional notion of the archive as one unified story, a linear continuity, has been questioned and the dream of total mastery over the archive rendered impossible. If there is no direct access to the archive at hand and if this sense of failure repetitively and inevitably occurs in the archival interpretations anyway, I suppose that an anarchival impulse driven by repetition and failure would be the most palpable agent for artists to capture or actualise the breakdown of the

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 147.

¹³¹ Ibid., pp. 5-6.

symbolic world or order. The ruptured space, room, or gap in the archive could be a possible departure where the rhythmical failures can freely expose a creative side of the archive and produce newly emerging opportunities to reorganise archival narratives made up of heterogeneous fragments and differences. Perhaps, the elements of repetition and failure are not artists' strategies but their ineluctable destiny to question the surrounding world and to perceive the memory and history inscribed in the archive, i.e. facing the archival/anarchival impulse as Sisyphus bears eternal suffering. I believe that their difficult and endless task can have a positive impact on the reading of institutional archives that challenges a fixed pattern of historiography and a prescriptive methodology of interpretations. I thus wish to elucidate the positivity of its archival/anarchival destiny drawn by contemporary archival art, which is important in its own right.

However, the ideas of repetition and failure are predominantly seen in a negative light. In general, while repetition is regarded as a banal reproduction of identical things or events without any distinguishability, failure is often devalued as a mere step on the path to success that stands at an antipode to the concept of success. How can we see these negative perceptions differently? I will explore repetition as a creative logic concealing its own variability beyond a psychoanalytic negative schema later in Chapter 2 but briefly give clues to the positive dimension of failure here before discussing it in Chapter 3 in detail.

A profound interest in the subject of the positivity of failure can be found in contemporary performance aesthetics and spectatorship. There are performance methods that assume failure's "capacity to unravel the certainties of knowledge, competence, representation, normativity, and authority".¹³² In the context of live performance, failure is not merely an antonym of success but a strategic creativity or a critical tool to undermine the habitual mode of thoughts and perception. According to Sara Jane Bailes, the idea of failure in performance creates a "space of doubt" where the representational structure of the conventional theatre as

¹³² Roisin O'Gorman and Margaret Werry, 'On Failure (On Pedagogy): Editorial Introduction', *Performance Research: On Failure*, Vol. 17, No. 1, Feb 2012, Routledge, p. 1.

mimesis and the audience's typical assumptions of what happens on stage are being effectively disrupted:

In some way the struggle of this space defines a commitment to abstraction and the attempt to purge theatre of its mimetic and symbolical inclinations, denying it certain inherited resources (linear plot, character, first-person dialogue and so on) in order to refine the procedures through which theatre form can reflect its content.¹³³

In this sense, staging failure can expand a feeling of plenitude and freedom to navigate the unknown territory, "the slippery, fugitive terrain of process and affect".¹³⁴ Because of a performance's one-off life, it is already surrounded by the possibility that anything could go wrong at the scene. There will always be a potential risk of accidents, such as a performer's mistakes or illness, technical glitches, or unexpected interruptions by the audience. Such unpredictable conditions enhance the sense of immediate and improvisational features of performative events. This point suggests that complete mastery over space and the experience of a live performance is impossible in the first place. Furthermore, when performances intentionally introduce a failing moment or gesture as a critical tool, it could strategically collapse the distance between performers and viewers, a boundary between inside and outside of the performance site, and deconstruct meanings of a failed or successful performance. We should remember that the discourse of failure in art practices is utilised to undermine the mainstream capitalist ideology's preference for success, outcomes, and progression. Contrary to goal-oriented fetishism, the territory of failure tends to be inclusive and permissive with respect to differences, uncertainty, and spontaneity.

What if this condition of failure in performances is related to the archive? The bodily experience of engaging with the archives is witnessed in contemporary art practices, where artists apply the corporeal quality of failure as a conceptual shift of "mapping, detouring, and

¹³³ Sara Jane Bailes, *Performance Theatre and the Poetics of Failure*, Routledge, 2011, p. 199, cited in Cormac Power, 'The Space of Doubt', *Performance Research: On Failure*, Vol. 17, No. 1, Feb 2012, Routledge, p. 68.

¹³⁴ O'Gorman and Werry, *ibid.*, p. 4.

getting lost”¹³⁵ in the archives. They facilitate an alternative route of making and doing of archival properties, actively failing. Frequently, artists’ participatory approaches and literal performances of the archive erode the archival boundaries between the inside and outside, the researcher and archivist, and fiction and non-fiction, by re-enacting history within the archive and actualising the dynamic possibilities of the archive. How archival failures are performatively acted out will be extensively examined later in Chapter 3.

Problematic questions can be raised at this point: What is meant by a successful archive and an unsuccessful archive, then? Can we say it is successful if the archive thoroughly includes all the things without any chronological gaps or without any gender, racial, and regional inequality? Can we say it is successful if the archive is perfectly organised without any structural and taxonomic error? Or, can we say it is perfect if the archive physically enables the accommodation of as many records as possible? Perhaps, idealising the archive as a successful or perfect entity itself is nonsense. As we have explored so far, the immanent archival paradoxes are detected and the archival sickness in a Derridean sense is permeated into the very logic of its operation. If the archive already contains its own internal contradiction to sustain itself – an archival and anarchival impulse at the same time – it would be ironic to see the archive through an absolute dichotomy between success and failure. Revaluing the quality of a Sisyphean loop here is, therefore, neither to suggest a certain model of successful archives nor to make a binary opposition between the success and failure of archival art production. The more important thing is to reconfigure the archival issues not on the premise of the rigid and convincing presentation of symbolic order but on the unusual premise of them being queer, a failure, and a detour.

Further, let us consider the current digital turn in archival collections. For instance, Google’s ambition to preserve all the knowledge available on the Web can be described as dreaming of the “Library of Babel” in Jorge Luis Borges’ term,¹³⁶ which remarkably affects both a personal and collective level of knowledge production and transmission. The *Google*

¹³⁵ Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, London: Duke University Press, 2011, p. 24.

¹³⁶ Jorge Luis Borges, ‘The Library of Babel’, in Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (eds.), *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*, London: Penguin Books, 2000, pp. 78-86.

Digital Project has vastly scanned the books of major research libraries around the world and has created searchable and viewable online collections. As of October 2015, more than 25 million volumes have been scanned, and part of this huge number of electronic texts has been circulated, leaving copyright issues and some errors of editing and metadata aside.¹³⁷ Google also launched the *Google Cultural Institute* to make online exhibitions and archival contents digitally accessible to everyone from anywhere, by partnering with world-leading cultural institutions. In this way, the dematerialisation of archives, the ever-increasing storage capacity, and data production in the online virtual world have accelerated more than ever. However, does this unlimited digital archiving capacity guarantee any solutions for spatial and temporal perpetuity and material vulnerabilities of the archive? Presumably not. The more advanced the digital memory and communication technology we have the more chaos and obsolescence we experience and the more uncertain and conflicting the information we have to deal with.

In sum, the general goal of the archive is to preserve “documents” in a broad sense, regarded as forms of historical knowledge or remembrance that are collected, repositied, and retrieved. Researching or revealing something new in the archives is thus inevitably associated with reflections on the past memory and writing of history. What is clear is that researchers’ critical engagement with the archive makes us think about the ways in which the past is delivered and history is narrated. However, it is critical to remember that the past can only be reached and imagined from the present moment.

The current archival turn in visual cultures seems to respond to contemporary obsolescent and precarious conditions of memory crisis, caused by frequent national immigrations, religious terrorism, war refuges as well as digital revolution. Corresponding to such an unstable and shifting sense of memory crisis, the artists’ desire to alternatively document the current states is intensified against loss and oblivion. I have remarked that artists as Sisyphean researchers obsess over archivally driven objects and research and their archival interventions produce a diverse range of visual forms of knowledge. The important question

¹³⁷ Stephen Heyman, ‘Google Books: A Complex and Controversial Experiment’, *The New York Times*, 28 Oct 2015, [Online] Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/29/arts/international/google-books-a-complex-and-controversial-experiment.html?_r=0, Last accessed 3 November 2015.

here is what their discursive practices are capable of and how their visual languages are executed. As briefly unveiled in Georges Didi-Huberman's exhibition, *How to Carry the World on One's Back?*, where the legacy of Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas* project is re-evaluated, archival art in favour of a visual montage tends to suggest alternative trajectories or insights to embrace discontinuity, heterogeneity, otherness, and fragmentation.

As I explored before, the archive is suggested as a regulatory system of "what can be said" in a Foucauldian sense and as a system of laws through which statements acquire their privileged power and evidentiary status in a Derridian sense.¹³⁸ Artists featured as archival users, makers, and thinkers in Uriel Orlow's term deconstruct a critical logic of the archive as historical knowledge and political power. They tend to look back to the past, obsessively work with the archive, and sometimes radically doubt or dismantle both the physical and conceptual meaning of it. Hal Foster identifies such archivally driven practices as "archival impulse". However, the moment of archival aporia is inevitably exposed during such an impulse. The archive is inherently built upon the paradoxical, contradictory natures of remembering and forgetting, preserving and destroying, and openness and finitude. Interestingly, these double-sided conditions of the archive are dramatised or the normative logic of archiving is often reversed in artistic archives. In the case of Song Dong's *Waste Not*, rows and rows of ordinary trivia are transformed into the exceptional and a doomed hoard of junk is revived as the living artistic collection.

More critically, I have noticed the repetitive failing rhythms (or moments) that the archival art is compulsively performing and generatively seeking for, something that I have termed as Sisyphean archive. In particular, I have argued that this Sisyphean loop ultimately moves towards the anarchival force to denaturalise and reconfigure the existing properties or conditions of the archive. With regard to the paradoxical aspects of the archive, Derrida significantly highlights the future-oriented and destructive direction of the archive. According to him, the archival hope to preserve the past helplessly slips away so that its feverish desire to

¹³⁸ Vered Maimon, 'Okwui Enwezor *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art*', exhibition review, *caa.reviews*, 23 April 2008, [Online] Available at: <http://www.caareviews.org/reviews/1111>, Last accessed 12 September 2015.

recuperate what once existed is doomed to be a permanent “failure”, and, consequently, the archive is associated rather with the future than with the past. Above all, Derrida identifies the archival sickness of the self-destructive drive operating through a fatal power of “repetition” in the archive that is destroying the archival memory yet being unnoticeable at once. I argue that these pathological yet potential rhythms of repetition and failure driven to the archival/anarchival impulse could be a fateful passage for artists to take their artistic departure for the reading of existing archives, the inscribed memory, and history within it. For example, Christian Boltanski realises this archival/anarchival destiny in his inventory work. The endless stacks of archival boxes containing factual and fictional artists’ documents are presented, mimicking the typical process of archiving and displaying. This mixture of full and empty boxes alludes to the fact that the archive is to be added continuously, opening out to the future. In addition, Ilya Kabakov’s *Sixteen Ropes* problematises our historical awareness built upon coherent narratives and grand events by introducing discontinuous rhythms of archival failures and ruptures. In relation to this, Foucault similarly raises a question about the archival linearity and continuity and argues history as discontinuity since ruptures and transformations are continually thrown up to be new foundations.

The artist as Sisyphus, so to speak, knows by intuition that there would be no direct or perfect access to grasp the archive as a whole and realises that the perpetual rhythms of repetition and failure in the archive can be a critical tool to undermine prescriptive and stereotypical patterns of archival logic and order. Acknowledging the fallibility and instability of the archive in flux, they continuously set out a repetitive pursuit of research, decipherment, and regeneration. By doing so, the rhythmical moments of a Sisyphean loop actively function for another creativity and performativity. Hence, a negative perception on repetition and failure can be subverted in Sisyphean archives. Typically, the concept of repetition is devalued as tiring copies of the same while that of failure is dismissed as a mere step for a better result. In the next two chapters, I shall particularly explore multi-layered, varied meanings of the Sisyphean loop, i.e. repetition as a creative logic and failure as a navigational strategy, and how these are related to the archive. The study on positivity of failure is frequently witnessed in

performance studies. Staging failure can evoke the unknown, alternative routes to experience both theatrical and real world differently where more inclusive and permissive manners are introduced to embrace uncertainty and spontaneity. When this sense of failure meets archival art, it will be interesting to see how artists apply bodily and participatory approaches to engaging with the archive. The corporeal quality of failure in the archive tends to erode the archival boundaries literally and conceptually.

As stressed above, the question of what is a successful archive and what is not is being etiolated as the immanent archival paradoxes are working at the very logic of its operation. The dialectic of the archival and anarchival impulse is the way in which the archive is sustained and functioned. Sisyphean archival art unfolds lacunas, holes, or ruptures in the complex layers of archival medium and meanings today and stages the mapping and doing of both archival and anarchival properties and qualities at the same time. It realises the paradoxical yet consistent tension between the archival and anarchival force; facilitates repetitive and failing rhythms in the archives; and embraces heterogeneity, irregularity, otherness, and discontinuity inside and outside the archives. As a result, the way in which Sisyphean artists are at play to crack the rigid symbolic order and to build a type of heterotopic order becomes a new communicative possibility to understand or reconfigure the archive in a creative and generative manner.

In the following two chapters, I shall respectively dissect the two wheels of the Sisyphean loop that I outlined in this chapter, as each wheel crucially contains performative and creative capacities of Sisyphean archival art in a profound way. In the next chapter, two critical forces of repetition will be mainly discussed – repetition as the external appearance of listing, displaying, and enumerating and repetition as the internal agent of returning to the archival origin and enacting archival variability and creativity – because these external and internal rhythms of repetition are not always straightforward and are subtly disguised in archival art.

CHAPTER 2. REPETITION

This chapter will extensively examine multi-potential mechanisms of repetition in archival art. Repetitive and serial patterns in archival art are commonly represented as visual languages, which tend to be in favour of lists; enumerations; and sequences of fragmented texts, images, or objects. Such visual repetition and seriality resemble a bureaucratic and administrative procedure, a quest for official records and memories. The external appearance of such art occasionally imitates real inventories; repositories; or collections within museums, galleries, and archives and seemingly follows standardised principles of listing and cataloguing. The art objects are often displayed in archival boxes, files, or vitrines, permeating into institutional territories. For similar reasons, Hal Foster claims that “the orientation of archival art is often more ‘institutive’ than ‘destructive’ and more ‘legislative’ than ‘transgressive’”.¹ Going one step further from Foster’s account, I argue that archival art can be oriented towards being institutive yet destructive, legislative yet transgressive if we examine it case by case. Moreover, archival art not only relies on a form of mimetic archives but also tactfully contaminates the existing archival integrity, being deconstructive and subversive. In other words, Sisyphean archival art discloses an aporia of the archival impulse. Both concurrent and conflictive features of archival art are simultaneously practiced through the multifaceted forces of repetition.

Three aspects of the mechanism of repetition will be examined throughout Chapter 2: (1) Repetition as Accumulation, (2) Repetition without Origin, and (3) Repetition as Creation. I shall start with repetition as the external appearance of listing, enumerating, fragmenting, and accumulative display. On the surface level, one could say that one type of archival art physically appears to conduct the iterative process of collecting both material and immaterial memories and to have repetitive orders, patterns, or styles, mimicking a systematic and routine procedure of institutional archiving. Even though the repetitive patterns of artistic archives are not easily recognisable from those of normative archives at first glance, these artistically

¹ Hal Foster, ‘An Archival Impulse’, *October*, no. 110, Fall 2004, p. 5.

mimetic archives definitely have different functions and operate through their own idiosyncratic logic. Their repetitive directions fall outside the purview of generalised archival norms, suggesting a new kind of order or trajectory in approaching archives or actualising the unusual effects. What the external repetition in archival art can do and what effects it can produce will be illuminated here.

There is another type of archival art in which the repetitive patterns are not straightforwardly externalised. It is immanently driven by a repetitive energy under the surface level. This internal agency of repetition can be an obsessive way of recalling and rewriting forgotten histories, of re-animating particular events from the past, or of awakening the certainty of death again and again. Sometimes, such a force of repetition in archival art is so compelling that it goes against the archival grain, addressing archival failures to achieve perfection and completion. That is to say, a certain type of archival art, propelled by pathological, destructive rhythms of repetition connotes a pervasive feeling of death, loss, and absence from within the archives. It also generates disbelief in archival objectives and origins to preserve the original past as it was. Besides, this anarchival force of internal repetition could eventually overturn the established archival realities and corrode an omniscient position of authoritative narrators and narratives formulating the archives. More interestingly, an outgrowth of such rhythms does not always move towards archival destruction, but rather, certain impulses could actively give impetus to the creation of something more inventive and constructive, which becomes far detached from any original intention and detours from where the ideas initially started. Repetition as a creative logic in archival art constantly dislocates the consistency of its taken-for-granted orders, functions, and utility, through which archival variability and creativity are newly enacted again and again. In this case, a destructive sense of compulsive repetition is then reversely turned into a creative, transgressive, and polyphonic force, and this is another critical part of the archival impulse to be explored in this chapter.

In fact, it is sometimes impossible to establish a crystal clear difference between external and internal repetition operating in archival art, as both features are inter-crossed and co-worked at the same time. Regardless of whether it is external or internal, repetition as an

irresistible energy nurtures new meanings and dynamics to read archival art and archives per se in an unconventional manner. I assume that repetition in archival art is activated to show ruptures in any symbolic order of archives that defines grand narratives and power structures and then to open up creative possibilities for new narratives and voices to kick in. Again, the ambivalence of the archival/anarchival impulse denotes the destructive and the constructive, both of which will be extensively demonstrated through the kaleidoscopic facets of the mechanism of repetition. I shall emphasise the archival/anarchival performativity of repetition, in light of the interactive poles of being external and internal rhythms.

2.1. REPETITION AS ACCUMULATION

*“Thus there is in the life of a collector a dialectical tension between the poles of order and disorder”.*²

– Walter Benjamin

Archival Obsession and the Collecting Drive towards the Archival/Anarchival

It can be assumed that the will to collect something in a physical way comes from the natural human drive to preserve personal and collective memories of the past. This could be because what we have gone through on a daily basis offers a sense of existential and corporeal foundation for who we are and where we are in the present and will be in the future. Some artists are especially keen to engage with the obsessive collecting drive to recollect past events in an archival form. Sometimes, their practices are not that different from their actual life stories and ways of living. They are repetitively collecting things as if completing the impossible dream of hunting down the past and archiving everything for a total unity of memories. This obsession continues as if Sisyphus endlessly carried out his punishment although he knew he would fail to reach his goal again and again. However, artists seem to know how to “fail better”.³ As collectors and archivists, the artists who will be discussed below explored the ways in which their personal archives of the collected and fragmented objects act as mnemonic devices, in their attempt to perform the unfeasible task of perfection, and reflect the relationships between the artists’ remembrance and subjectivity. What and why do these artists collect, and how do they wish to keep their collections intact or evolving? This section will explore what their repetition and failure mean in collecting (or collecting-like art practices).

The passion towards collecting can be driven by various impulses. There could be the pure amusement of sorting, arranging, and re-arranging collected objects or simply a longing

² Walter Benjamin, ‘Unpacking My Library: A Talk About Book Collecting’, in Hannah Arendt (ed.), *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, translated by Harry Zohn, New York: Schocken Books, 1968, p. 60.

³ Samuel Beckett, *Worstward Ho*, London: John Calder, 1983, p. 7.

for the past. Collectors can be occupied with filling a void, escaping from fears of disappearance or dreaming of eternity through compensative object accumulation. Meanwhile, collecting can emerge out of darker territory than mere pleasure – depression, jealousy, despair, and oppressive desire for ownership.⁴ Above all, collecting has, since ancient times, been a means of showing off one's wealth and power. Until the sixteenth century, the culture of collecting in the West had been the exclusive domain only of royals and aristocrats who could possess luxurious jewellery and treasures.⁵ The Church was also a major party involved in obsessive collecting of varied relics, vessels, and legendary creatures throughout the Middle Ages.⁶ It was not until the nineteenth century that these secretive and private collections of the ruling classes were opened to the public in the form of public museums.⁷ From being an exclusive prerogative, collecting has become a common pastime for people in general; however, in a contemporary capitalist society, it still occasionally functions as the ostentatious display of one's status and wealth. Since the Industrial Revolution, the advent of mass production and consumption society has greatly impacted the scope of leisure activities. Especially, collecting became the most legitimate and popular personal hobby for Americans during the twentieth century, mirroring the close link between consumerism, democratic economy, and the possession of objects at home.⁸ There are too many things to possess, from which the American culture of "more is better" stems. Interestingly, the postwar period of capitalist growth was precisely the time when Andy Warhol (1928–1987) was in his heyday.

A leading figure of American pop art, Andy Warhol was an everyday collector who indiscriminately gathered all kinds of prosaic materials that passed through his life and work. In fact, Warhol's works were frequently derived from his obsessive collecting, documenting, and archiving as is shown by the fact that he mainly worked with images found in popular culture. Compared to his famous prints and painting works from the Factory, it is quite rarely

⁴ John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (eds.), 'Introduction', *The Cultures of Collecting*, London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1994, p. 5.

⁵ Philipp Blom, *To Have and To Hold: An Intimate History of Collectors and Collecting*, London: Allen Lane and New York: The Penguin Press, 2002, p.16.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

⁸ Megan Kathleen Shaeffer, 'A Social History of Hoarding Behavior', MA thesis, Kent State University, Ohio, USA, 2012, pp. 38-40.

acknowledged that he created a unique collection of detritus from his everyday life, collected on a daily basis. As a result, approximately 600 cardboard boxes were left, which Warhol himself named *Time Capsules*. (Fig. 2.1.1) After the move of his Factory, he decided to store almost everything that came into his hands from the valuable items related to his works and business records to trivial souvenirs such as bills, receipts, telephone notes, and letters by putting a box beside his desk.⁹ Once the box was full, it was sealed, labelled, and sent to another location where his private repository was. He left a text about *Time Capsules* in 1975 where he describes them as follows:

Everything in your closet should have an expiration date on it the way milk and bread and magazines and newspapers do, and once something passes its expiration date, you should throw it out. [...] I started off myself with trunks and the odd piece of furniture, but then I went around shopping for something better and now I just drop everything into the same-size cardboard boxes that have a colour patch on the side for the month of the year. I really hate nostalgia, though, so deep down I hope they all get lost and I never have to look at them again. That's another conflict. I want to throw things out the window as they're handed to me, but instead I say thank you and drop them into the box-of-the-month. But my other outlook is that I really do want to save things so they can be used again someday.¹⁰

In this way, Warhol's obsolete goods have resonated with potential future discoveries in these dark containers for long. The remnants of his life were literally and metaphorically saved by his archival obsession. According to Mario Kramer, curator of the collection at the Museum für Moderne Kunst, "Warhol's *Time Capsules* impressively visualise a cultural 'journey into the past', while at the same time mirroring American society from the 1960s to 1980s".¹¹ *Time Capsules* are now a rich research source about Warhol's life and work for many academics and researchers. The trivial objects that were seemingly worth nothing in monetary value at that time have obtained their referential meanings through study at the present time. The scattered,

⁹ Andy Warhol Museum (ed.), *Andy Warhol's time capsule 21*, Pittsburgh, Cologne: Dumont and Kunst Verlag, 2004, p. 14.

¹⁰ Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)*, San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Publishers Ltd., 1975, pp. 144-145.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.15.

enigmatic information from *Time Capsules* are still being investigated because Warhol did not leave any descriptions or metadata about each item in the boxes. He just stored the objects because they came into his hands.



Figure 2.1.1. Andy Warhol, *Time Capsule 526*, 1982, Andy Warhol Museum Pittsburgh

Interestingly, Warhol continued filling boxes from the 1970s to his death but never opened them again in his lifetime.¹² This extensive personal collection denotes not only his feverish endeavour to collect every trace of his own but also the vulnerability and futility of the archival dream to secure a complete world. Adorno once mentioned in his *Minima Moralia* that “the will to possess reflects time as fear of loss, of the irretrievable nature of everything”.¹³ Warhol might have attempted to grasp the loss of time by virtue of his habitual archiving, despite the fact that he knew that his efforts would be unavailing forever. As Warhol admitted in the above passage, he realised the conflicting choice or dilemmas between just throwing away things, acting against nostalgia, and keeping them for possible future use. With the

¹² Ibid., pp. 144-145.

¹³ Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, London: New Left Books, 1974, cited in Ingrid Schaffner and Matthias Winzen (eds.), *Deep Storage: Collecting, Sorting, and Archiving in Art*, Prestel, 1998, p. 23.

repetitive cycles of boxing the scraps of everyday memories, he might have comforted himself and satisfied his collecting paranoia to let nothing be discarded and might have been relieved by the fact that “they were there”¹⁴ in sealed containers.

He seemed to count on the idea that his collection existed only in unattended fragments and, as stored memories, could always be forgotten, misperceived, and eluded. As is well-known, Warhol himself was well aware of the ephemeral and transient nature of things, materiality, and fame. What I want to highlight here is not the individual referentiality or provenance of the items in the boxes as having archival value but the fact that his way of possessing things reflects another side of his ambivalent attitude towards time and existence. On one hand, Warhol made the best use of the abundance of materiality in consumer society and of the glamour of celebrities for his art production. On the other hand, he might have wished to rescue any fleeting and evanescent moments of material, time, and memory through the repetitive comfort of incessant collecting. He had to deal with this dialectic of permanence and transience and of retention and oblivion throughout his lifetime. The more Warhol confronted the feelings of insecurity for the passing of things, the more he clung to accumulation. Warhol’s paradoxical motivation of archival obsession shows the duality of admiring ephemerality and seizing the ephemeral condition at the same time.

Dieter Roth (1930–1998) is another German-Swiss artist whose archival obsession is similar to Warhol’s way of art making and living. The paradox that Warhol held on to is more dramatised in Roth’s practices. Roth’s unwearied collecting and archival accumulation are inseparable from his everyday routine and artistic procedures. While Warhol wished for compensation for the futility of the world by means of repetitive collecting and storing, Roth confronted the changing nature of materiality and immateriality itself. He invented various forms and strategies of collecting and archiving, which were based on a significantly self-disciplined and contemplative manner of collecting. His works varied from paintings, drawings, prints, books, objects, and installations to audio-visual records and his working materials were composed of papers, photos, and clothes to waste and food. Over an extensive period of time,

¹⁴ Sven Spieker, *The Big Archive: Art from Bureaucracy*, Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, c.2008, p. 3.

he collected a varied range of everyday trivia; wrote hundreds of diaries containing his daily routines, memos, and scribbles; and took documentary photos. These activities were all transformed into a series of artworks. He also took on the challenges of painting and crafting with cheese and chocolates, cooking books with a traditional sausage recipe, and making prints out of sliced banana. Obviously, in the course of time, the products of these unusual oeuvres have decayed and deformed. Roth was particularly immersed in gripping the change and metamorphosis of such perishable materials by virtue of carefully transcribing those moments into visible artworks. This wide spectrum of media and materials that Roth dealt with contributed to his persistent efforts to embody a visible and invisible flow of compulsive collecting drive and a lifelong trajectory of recordkeeping.

Roth was a serious yet extraordinary archivist, applying his own strict and systematic rules to his works and records and experimenting with eccentric and organic collectibles. Documentation has always been an integral part of his work. There was no exception when he had to sell some of his works, namely his chocolate sculptures. In 1989, Roth's *Self Tower/Lion Tower* (Fig. 2.1.2) was purchased by the Emanuel Hoffmann-Stiftung (Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation) and exhibited in the Museum für Gegenwartskunst in Basel.¹⁵ The towers consisted of two sets of shelves on which his self-portrait sculptures, made up of chocolate and sugar, were stacked up in a row. As the work's title indicates, one work was *Self-Portrait as an Old Man* (1968–1989) and the other one, *Lion Self* (1969–1989). Roth made new casts of both portraits and built towers with them laid upon one another on glass shelves. These layers of the ceiling-high towers are thus weighed down by their own weight, bearing a risk of collapsing and being slanted. Roth initially refused to sell them, regarding them as not complete and still in progress. Once the Foundation guaranteed him permanent access to a workplace at the museum, he finally agreed to do so.¹⁶ It was a special room where the artist undertook the maintenance and conservation work for the towers.

¹⁵ Theodora Vischer and Bernadette Walter (eds.), *Roth Time: A Dieter Roth Retrospective*, exhibition catalogue, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Baden: Lars Müller Publishers, 2003, p. 256.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

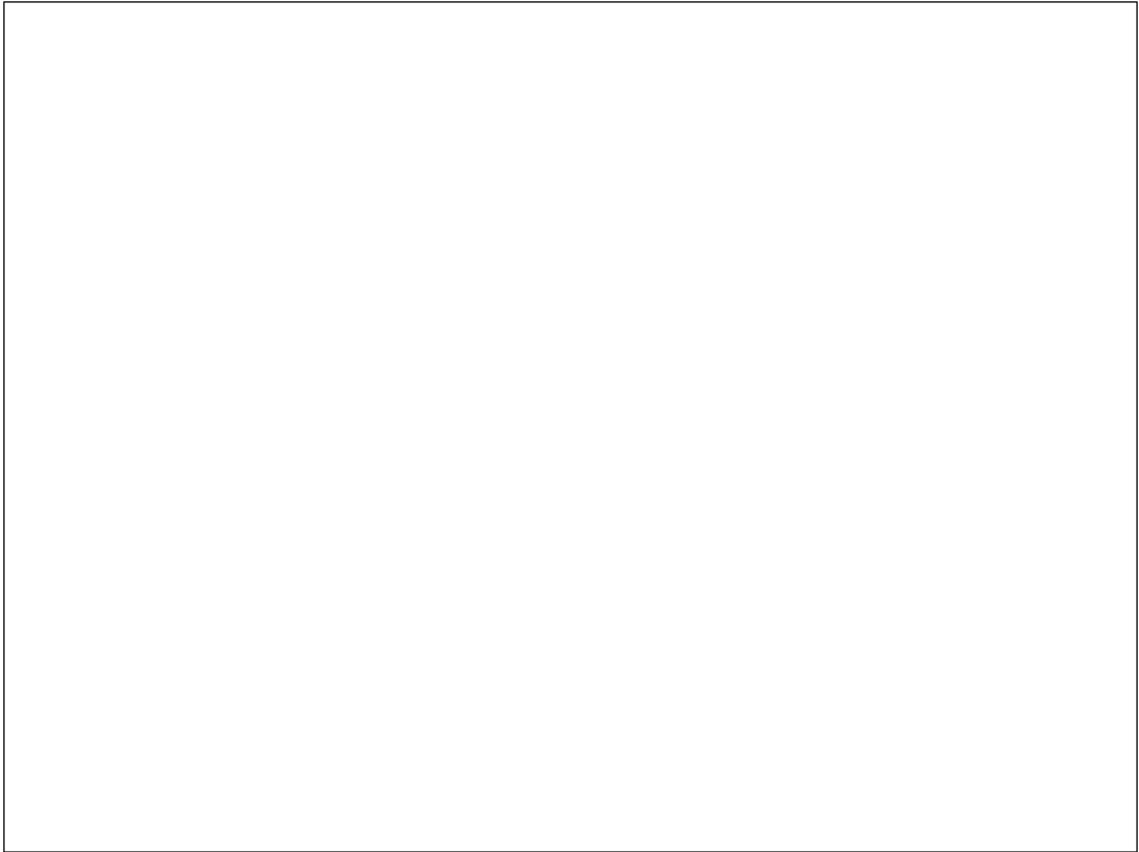


Figure 2.1.2. Dieter Roth, *Self Tower*, 1994/2013, Hauser & Wirth New York

In accordance with Roth's own wish, the appearance of the chocolate sculptures is gradually being altered and spoiled as time goes by. There is always a repetitive cycle of decaying and producing in this work. He let the towers deteriorate in a museum context but did restore them back to their precarious state so that they could remain there longer. However, what he was more concerned with was keeping records of the process of change, rather than perfectly conserving the original condition of the work as it were. He conducted the tasks of both a professional archivist and conservator: filming what he did in the room and every change he made, photographing them with written instructions, regularly producing progress reports, and binding these records as official files.¹⁷ Roth's process art or decay art necessarily comes together with this set of documentations. For him, there was an inseparable link between them. *Self Tower/Lion Tower* not only renatures the transient phases of materiality again and again

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 158.

but also visualises the artist's long-term engagement with material, time, and space. Given the artist's immersion in taking care of the towers for years, his routine as a keeper had also accumulated day by day. In other words, the invisibility of the artist's will to and obsession with preserving and archiving emerged visually and was steadily recorded by the artist himself. Roth persistently proceeded to activate the repetitive series of the revisiting, re-processing, and re-treatment of the failing works, through which both the durational journeys of the materials' disappearance and the artist's archival obsession are interestingly evoked.¹⁸ Above all, the archival/anarchival status of Roth's repetitively failing works continues to exist in a museum context, which concurrently features Sisyphean archival art as being institutive and destructive.

More apparently, his *Flat Waste* (1973) (Fig. 2.1.3) represents how his daily routine became a work of art itself. Roth himself took on the task of collecting pieces of arbitrary waste that passed through him day after day for a year. The only rule for collecting items was that they should be less than "two or three sixteenths of an inch"¹⁹ thick so that he could put these scraps of trash in each transparent plastic sheet and bind them. The collection amounts to 623 ring binders, which include all kinds of everyday ephemera such as receipts, cigarette butts, newspapers, postcards, tissues, wrappers, and even fruit peel and remnants of food.²⁰ Each binder has a label with Roth's name and the chronological date written on it. When the shelving units containing these ring binders are exhibited, they look like a bureaucratic archive room. Viewers can get a glimpse of Roth's daily activities by flipping through these folders: what he did and ate, where he travelled, and whom he met. There are even some signs of decay from

¹⁸ Even after Dieter Roth's death, *Self Tower/Lion Tower* is in progress today at the Museum für Gegenwartskunst. The video camera continues to document everyone who visits the place. Roth more radically expanded his idea of decaying art of chocolate and sugar outside the context of the public museum. In collaboration with his son Björn, Roth set up his own private museum, named Schimmelmuseum (Mould Museum) in Hamburg (1992-2004). Turning the old coach house into a museum, Roth installed *Self Tower* and *Sugar Tower*, consisting of chocolate and sugar casts of self-portraits. There was also a kitchen and a workplace for the necessary task. Under the uncontrolled humidity, works on display became drastically corroded and transformed. The museum was demolished in 2003 owing to its deteriorated state.

See Theodora Vischer and Bernadette Walter (eds.), *Roth Time: A Dieter Roth Retrospective*, exhibition catalogue, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Baden: Lars Müller Publishers, 2003, pp. 256–268. For more information and a virtual tour of the museum, visit Dieter Roth Foundation's website, [Online] Available at: http://www.dieter-roth-foundation.com/the_schimmelmuseum/, Last accessed 2 March 2016.

¹⁹ Gina Buenfeld, 'Diaries', in *Dieter Roth Diaries*, exhibition leaflet, File Note #79, Camden Arts Centre, London, 2012, n. p.

²⁰ Alastair Sooke, 'Dieter Roth: Diaries, Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, review', *The Telegraph*, 6 Aug 2012, [Online] Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/edinburgh-festival-reviews/9456517/Dieter-Roth-Diaries-Fruitmarket-Gallery-Edinburgh-review.html>, Last accessed 29 February 2016.

mould because some binders contained leftover bits of food consumed. What he endeavoured to archive are things that are normally considered anarchival. Roth diligently collected, filed, and catalogued waste materials, symbolising his compelling attention to cyclical forces of appearance and disappearance, production and degradation, and life and death. It seems that he attempted to avoid the displeasure of fateful death or reduce the fear of it.

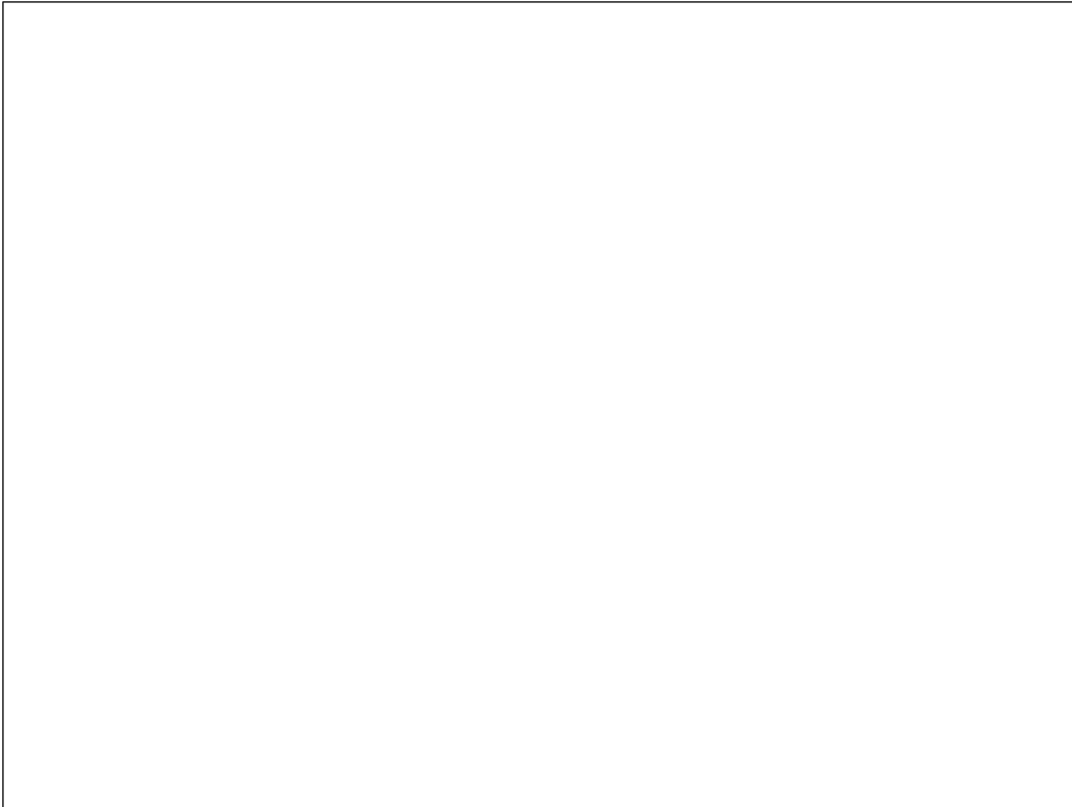


Figure 2.1.3. Dieter Roth, *Flat Waste*, 1973/2013, Camden Arts Centre London

One of Roth's strategies to visualise such conflictive processes in daily life was quantitative accumulation. He emphasised the "power of quantity" as follows:

Instead of showing quality (surprising quality) we show quantity (surprising quantity). I got this idea (Quantity instead of Quality) in this way: 'Quality' in BUSINESS (f.i. advertising) is just a subtle way of being Quantity-

minded: Quality in advertising wants expansion and (in the end) **power** =
Quantity. **So**, let us produce Quantities for once! [original emphasis]²¹

This quote is related to another piece, *Daily Mirror Book* (1961), which is made up of scraps from the British tabloids. The book is illegible since it comprises random cropped, fragmented texts and images from newspapers so that only partial contents can be grasped.²² A more distinctive feature of the book is the volume of news, which is now stored far from its original context and function. According to curator Sarah Suzuki, the idea behind this work initially came from Roth's working experience in an advertising company as a young man.²³ He came to understand that the ultimate goal of printed media is selling copies, i.e. quantity instead of quality.²⁴ This power of quantitative collecting is something that permeates all of his working methods and strategies to create varied artistic assemblages. He continued to keep records, to develop collections, to manage archives, and to publish similar kinds of compilations in multiple editions so that his quantitative works could be exposed as much as possible. That is to say, his quotidian archiving as quantity and volume in *Flat Waste* turns out to be a visibly well-organised collection of daily detritus and disorder. The act of repetitive accumulation assigns "power of quantity" to both everyday trivia and the daily passage of time, demonstrating that residues from daily activities are an indispensable part of life and are in themselves enough to be revealing and significant. In doing so, the artist's determined period of life becomes gradually fused with the art itself.

²¹ Dieter Roth, *Daily Mirror Book*, artist's book of newspaper, Reykjavik: forlag ed, 1961, n.p., cited in Sarah Suzuki (ed.), *Wait, Later This Will Be Nothing: Editions by Dieter Roth*, exhibition catalogue, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2013, p. 13.

²² Suzuki, op. cit., p. 13.

²³ Sarah Suzuki curated Dieter Roth's exhibition, entitled *Wait, later this will be nothing: Editions by Dieter Roth* at MoMA in 2013.

²⁴ Andrew M. Goldstein, 'Expert Eye: MoMA Curator Sarah Suzuki on How Dieter Roth Invented the Artist's Book', interview, *Art Space*, 20 June 2013, [Online] Available at: http://www.artspace.com/magazine/interviews_features/expert_eye/moma_curator_sarah_suzuki_dieter_roth_interview-51366, Last accessed 2 March 2016.



Figure 2.1.4. Dieter Roth, *Solo Scenes*, 1997-8/2013, Camden Arts Centre London

At last, Roth himself became a work of art in *Solo Scenes* (1997–1998) (Fig. 2.1.4), documenting his last year of life on video camera. After being diagnosed with a heart disease, he set up video cameras in his home and studios and filmed himself living on. The resulting 128 video monitors show extremely personal and domestic scenes in which the artist is reading, writing, eating, loitering, having a shower, using the toilet, and sleeping.²⁵ Roth creates stages of himself and his days of dying in real time. His video diaries came to an end when he died in 1998. The flickering screens of unedited footage are juxtaposed on shelves in a nonlinear order. The fragmented scenes of his daily routine are silently looping with no beginning and ending. This final self-portrait of Roth becomes a kind of human archive of memento mori, alluding to the fact that we live on, grow old, and disappear. There is dignity as well as vanity in life and

²⁵ Theodora Vischer and Bernadette Walter (eds.), *Roth Time: A Dieter Roth Retrospective*, exhibition catalogue, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Baden: Lars Müller Publishers, 2003, p. 214.

death. The artist's tireless archival meditation on art and life is literally embodied in the loop of self-documenting and his attempt at immortality is staged through the loop of self-rescuing.

All of Roth's works that we have explored so far resonate with a concurrent sense of destruction and creativity. There is always a paradoxical archiving desire, working towards what is not perceived to be achievable – to preserve perishable food, obsolescent waste, and fateful death in his practice. His persistent study of the overlooked, the discarded, and the failed is enacted through repetitive accumulation of daily drudgery and time, echoing existential reflection. It is an elusive pursuit of giving a shape to immateriality and impermanence, yet it is a defiant challenge to archive anarchival material and moments.

Among the diverse motivations for collecting, Philipp Blom emphasises one factor that every collection is never free from – the presence of death: “[the] fear of ‘the necessity of oblivion’, of death [...] that fosters a need to collect, to create permanence, to treat the graveyard earth, a vast field of past urn burials, as a repository of treasures and miracles: [...] What we collect, therefore, is both instrument of our survival beyond the grave and the very reminder of our inexorable end”.²⁶ This fear of oblivion and death seems to deepen more and more in current societies where the ever-increasing cycles of material birth and death are experienced every day. With an all-pervading sense of material prosperity, we have to deal with abundant but soon obsolescent stuff and, consequently, our wish to secure ourselves from the fate of disappearing – like the finite lifespan of commodities. Besides, the widespread circulation of limitlessly reproductive images and data in a contemporary digital era is the main reason behind the accelerated prevalence of this situation, which will be examined in detail later in this chapter.

At any rate, the seemingly never-ending quest for collecting of both artists implies the inexorable disappearance of being and materiality. Andy Warhol was engrossed in revealing by-products of consumerism by creating works of art about ephemerality and the *Time Capsules* collection of ephemera. Dieter Roth's quantitative accumulation of trivial, immaterial objects over time, shows a kind of compulsive repetition, responding to melancholic feelings of

²⁶ Blom, op. cit., p. 190.

finitude and oblivion. The repetitive battles of accumulating and archiving in works of these two artists can be seen as a mode of resistance to the generalised notion of collecting that only valuable and meaningful items are credited as collectibles and as a mode of disturbance in the normative grammar of collection regulated by an authoritative and logical taxonomy. Being interested in trivia and unarchivable immateriality, the artists' collecting exchanges ordinariness with uniqueness and functions to activate illogical and erratic ruptures in institutionalised collections. More importantly, this makes the viewers confront the undeniable death to come and accustoms them to a fearful fate of having to disappear someday by a way of repetitive familiarity. Regarding the notion of having to face the displeasure of death in relation to repetitive action, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic approach should be considered, which will be discussed later in the next section, 'Repetition without Origin'. In the following part, I shall focus on another effect of artists' collecting that interferes with or merges with institutions. It is noticeable that an artist's personal documentation of life or domestic possessions as archival art often occurs publicly and that archival art is presented within the institutional context. Intertwined with private and public realms and personal and collective memories, archival art inherently critiques its own language and territory of the institution where it stands on.

Orderly Hoarding, Disturbing Museums

However, the particular archival obsession of Warhol and Roth signals two critical observations for further discussion. First, once the repetitive rhythm of collecting and archiving runs to extremes, it could become pathological, bordering on hoarding. In general, collectors apply their own principle or system to manage their collection to be sorted, catalogued, and preserved and lead a reasonable life alongside it, while hoarders are the opposite. Hoarders pile up the sheer number of possessions in stacks, squeezed in a private space, regardless of whether or not collectibles are of value or use. They literally keep garbage. The most distinctive feature of

hoarding is the “difficulty [of] discarding”²⁷ things. Their inability or failure to throw things out often threatens the healthy and normal conditions of a living space and even could harm people nearby. The hoarding disorder in psychological terms is officially defined as a mental illness.²⁸ It seems to be based on an uncontrollable compulsion to infinitely add things to the existing stack of things, a behaviour deemed to be destructive, abnormal, and chaotic.

But in fact, there is a very thin line between collecting and hoarding. Both have in common the tendencies for collectors/hoarders not to anticipate their collections to be finalised wholes. In relation to this, Jean Baudrillard claims, “The collection is never really initiated in order to be completed [...] What makes a collection transcend mere accumulation is not only the fact of its being culturally complex, but the fact of its incompleteness, the fact that it lacks something”.²⁹ This statement again echoes Derrida’s point that “the archivist produces more archive, and that is why the archive is never closed. It opens out of the future”.³⁰ In light of this claim, the consequent collection or clutter accumulated by the practices of all collectors, hoarders, and archivists are set out to grow ad infinitum. The difference between collecting and hoarding is that while the collectors’ repetitive habits still have to do with a continuum of order, coherence, and logic, the hoarders’ repetitive pathology is inclined towards discontinuous fragments of disorder, destruction, and chaos. However, the boundary between collecting and hoarding is likely to be shaken, reversed, or crossed in some cases of archival art. A certain group of artists are a bit like hoarders considering the fact that they are obsessed with archiving items that are often of no value or no use, transforming their drive to collect into artistic (dis)order and to utilise precariousness in creativity; also, their collection does not intend to refer to the original inception of memories or events in the past but to move forward to the future-oriented stories to be added again and again. Embedding features of prospective

²⁷ Shaeffer, op. cit., p. 41.

²⁸ In psychology, hoarding used to be a subcategory of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) but it has been newly included as an independent category of ‘Hoarding Disorder’ in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) since 2013. See Susan Krauss Whitbourne, ‘4 Signs that You’re an Extreme Collector: Collecting vs. Hoarding: Where to draw the line?’, *Psychology Today*, 31 Jul 2012, [Online] Available at: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/fulfillment-any-age/201207/4-signs-youre-extreme-collector>, Last accessed 5 March 2016.

²⁹ Jean Baudrillard, ‘The System of Collecting’, translated by Roger Cardinal, in John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (eds.), *The Cultures of Collecting*. London: Reaktion, 1994, p. 13 and p. 23.

³⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, translated by Eric Prenowitz, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 68.

expansion, precariousness, and chaos, artists' peculiar collecting/hoarding paradoxically settle down in cultural institutions regulated by certain principles of organising and managing. Therefore, their practices are standing at the border between stability and openness, between order and disorder, and between the archival and anarchival.

Also, what Warhol and Roth accumulated was a bunch of obsolescent goods such as daily ephemera, remnants, and perishable food that deserved to collectively be called as "waste". In the same sense, Song Dong's *Waste Not*, discussed in Chapter 1, also converts Song Dong's mother's hoard of daily rubbish into a work of art. These types of works make us think about the customary criteria of selection and preservation processes of museums as cultural institutions. By inserting waste archives in a museum setting, they unveil "how precarious is the distinction that our cultural frames draw between art and waste, between archive and rubbish".³¹ The conventional notion of a museum is that of an institution generally expected to perform as an archive of material culture, sheltering material-based cultural heritage and aiming at the delivery of worthwhile and eternal values of cultural memory from the past.³² However, this concept of art museum has been challenged by both the field of contemporary art and that of museology; therefore, its walls have now become more permeable and flexible than before. The major challenge of transforming the art museum was initially taken up by the twentieth century's artists who took on Marcel Duchamp's legacy.³³ They critiqued the museum as a cultural institution usually by bringing everyday objects into a museum space and by documenting everydayness. As a result, the idea of museum collections in a permanent and neutral state has been dislocated and immaterialised.

Artists including Song Dong and Dieter Roth, who bring their peculiar collections of waste into a museum context, critically question what we value and why we value what we do. Integrating the observations above, I would say that this type of archival art is prominently

³¹ Aleida Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 376.

³² Susanne Hauser, 'Waste into Heritage: Remarks on Materials in the Arts, on Memories and the Museum', in Brian Neville and Johanne Villeneuve (eds.), *Waste-site stories: the recycling of memory*, New York: State University of New York Press, 2002, pp. 39-40.

³³ Christine Bernier, 'Art and Archive: The Dissimulation Museum', in Brian Neville and Johanne Villeneuve (eds.), *Waste-Site Stories: The Recycling of Memory*, New York: State University of New York Press, 2002, pp. 56 -57.

presented as “orderly hoarding”. An artist’s infinite impulse to collect borders on pathological hoarding, particularly if the interest is in waste archives. The term I coined; “orderly hoarding” apparently entails contradicting meanings, referring at the same time to both an organised sequence and a chaotic accumulative compulsion. However, this paradoxical association is precisely the point that I want to make here. The discrepant qualities of orderly hoarding are simultaneously shown in some archival arts. The external operation of orderly hoarding seems to exhaustively follow bureaucratic principles of archiving. However, the internal energy of this activity encroaches on the territory of the museum and then contaminates its existing system and logic.

Ilya Kabakov is one of a number of artists who is interested in this aspect of archiving. His “museumification”³⁴ of waste evokes new potentials of the waste archive that undermines the rigid notion between eternal conservation and the disposed rubbish. He usually creates a form of installation, which facilitates paradoxical rhythms of orderly hoarding and embraces failed goods and failing moments emerging from a cultural memory. In Kabakov’s installation, *The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away (The Garbage Man)* (1988) (Fig. 2.1.5), the invented character hoarded garbage of ordinary items throughout his lifetime and filled three rooms in his apartment with them. The man writes about his obsession with garbage, lamenting the inescapable relationship between the world he is living in and the endless springing up of garbage as follows:

The whole world, everything which surrounds me here, is to me a boundless dump with no ends or borders, an inexhaustible, diverse sea of garbage. In this refuse of an enormous city one can feel the powerful breathing of its entire past. This whole dump is full of twinkling stars, reflections and fragments of culture [...] But still, why does the dump and its image summon my imagination over and over again, why do I always return to it? Because I feel that man, living in our region, is simply suffocating in his own life among the garbage since there is nowhere to take it, nowhere to

³⁴ Ibid., p. 56.

sweep it out – we have lost the border between garbage and non-garbage space.³⁵

The man's monologue suggests that the world is encircled by everyday garbage that is always there and never disappears. His gaze on the world of garbage envisages the world beyond the archive, questioning where this discarded stuff would have gone if it was not included anywhere. Certain cultural objects are privileged over others to be preserved in the archive while the excluded are eventually sent to landfills. Aleida Assmann points out that such a distinction between archives and rubbish dumps represents symbols and symptoms of cultural memory and oblivion.³⁶ This border is a kind of fixed social and cultural framework to stand for what we save and what we discard.

³⁵ Boris Groys, David. A. Ross, and Iwona Blazwick, *Ilya Kabakov*, London: Phaidon Press, 1998, pp. 102-103.

³⁶ Assmann, op. cit., pp. 369-370.



Figure 2.1.5. Ilya Kabakov, *The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away (The Garbage Man)*, 1988

For Kabakov, these two entities have a fluid relationship.³⁷ His attitude is derived from the social mood of the Soviet Union where he had to live a double life. He was officially a book illustrator and, in parallel, worked on his own conceptual artworks as an unofficial artist.³⁸ Under the Soviet regime, only artworks that advocated and promoted Soviet policies or ideologies could be credited as official art. Otherwise, art productions outside the governmental approval were omitted from records so that could not be officially realised and documented as part of the mainstream. Kabakov declares that he took up his official job as an illustrator merely to survive, while his genuine interests in art were directed to another side of social reality.³⁹ The failing aspects of Soviet's controlled economy and oppressive bureaucracy, which are prominently reflected in many of Kabakov's works. In fact, for Kabakov, the unofficial art scene was much more significant, realistic, and deserving of being remembered and preserved. The concept of value and nonvalue becomes opaque and is reversed in his practices. The dichotomous cultural system of Soviet society forces him to rethink the mechanisms of cultural waste and cultural archives.⁴⁰ In other words, this repressive mechanism of deciding what to remember and what to forget intensified his anxiety that the unofficial artworks would become dumped and forgotten. Hence, Kabakov started to archive garbage, creating art that paradoxically remembers nonvalue and oblivion.

In *The Garbage Man*, although its title implies the cramped and filthy rooms filled with objects accumulated through hoarding, the accumulated items are neatly organised and classified in three rooms. The work, so to speak, is featured as orderly hoarding. Each item previously regarded as representing nonvalue is arranged on desks and shelves and presented in vitrines and sideboards precisely like in a museum display. They are not treated as anonymous clutter here. There are descriptions attached to the items, explaining their stories and the connections between them. It is an intimate personal archive of a character's life story that is enumerated through orderly garbage. Applying his very own way of museum approach and

³⁷ Boris Groys, 'Survey: The Movable Cave, or Kabakov's Self-memorials', in Groys et al., op. cit., 1998, p. 50.

³⁸ Kabakov worked as a children's book illustrator for his official career mainly during the 1950s while he was engaged with the unofficial art group of conceptual artists in Moscow.

³⁹ David A. Ross, 'Interview: David A. Ross in conversation with Ilya Kabakov', in Groys et al., op. cit., 1998, p. 11.

⁴⁰ Assmann, op. cit., p. 379.

taxonomy, Kabakov reverses the common idea: the museum as a keeper of eternity and garbage dump of worthlessness. In addition, it demonstrates that the fate of whether something is considered to be of value or nonvalue could be a matter of decision making and negotiation.⁴¹ For Kabakov, real life emerges out of the unpainted trajectory of everyday life. Kabakov's processing of rubbish in an orderly hoarding manner consequently deconstructs a certain monolithic judgement on cultural value and ideological manifestation, mocking pointless bureaucratic control and its procedures as implemented by an authoritarian regime.

For housing the orderly hoarding collection, his preference for installation forms another crucial part of what dislocates the symbolic meaning of the museum space. Kabakov developed imaginary characters in his fictional albums containing texts and drawings mainly in the early 1970s. His ideas of multiple characters were realised in *Ten Characters* (1985–1988), which was his first major installation in the West, exhibited in New York in 1988. He initially formulated the characters' rooms in his Moscow studio, located in a communal apartment, but these were shown to a peer group of artists only at that time, as there were no opportunities to present such unofficial works inside the Soviet Union.⁴²

The Garbage Man was built as one installation from *Ten Characters*. Kabakov chose a set of installations that were reminiscent of the Soviet communal apartment in order to deliver the actual aspect of “the ordinary, banal Soviet world, with its community, language, wretchedness, sentimentality” to the Western world.⁴³ The apartment becomes a critical metaphor for his Soviet life, in which members of a crowded family had to live and share their lives together under cramped, non-privacy conditions. For Kabakov, there was no other way but to create his own independent spaces for characters in order to transport those particular moods into a Western environment. As a result, multi-layered spatial meanings in the installation interact intricately. First, like a crash landing, there is a cultural encounter between the Soviet communal apartment and the Western white cube. This is the point from which the

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ronald Feldman Gallery, ‘Ilya Kabakov: Ten Characters’, 30 April - 4 June 1988, exhibition press release, [Online] Available at: <http://www.feldmangallery.com/pages/exhsolo/exhkab88.html>, Last accessed 12 March 2016.

⁴³ Anton Vidokle, ‘In Conversation with Ilya and Emilia Kabakov’, *e-flux*, Journal 40, Dec 2012, [Online] Available at: <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/in-conversation-with-ilya-and-emilia-kabakov/>, Last accessed 12 March 2016.

fictive characters, reflecting Kabakov's many other selves as a Soviet artist, and Western viewers enter a completely foreign community to meet face to face. Then, the confidential art movement in the closed society of the Soviet Union is publicly exposed off-site.⁴⁴ Interestingly, it can be witnessed at the same time when Kabakov's intimate privacy of living in the communal apartment and secret career as an unofficial artist becomes public and, reversely, the general lives and collective memories of the Soviet society are pathologically personalised in his collection and installation. Hence, the apartment installation within the museum mixes fictive and factual, private and public, and internal and external levels of space. This archival act of dislocation and disjuncture in the form of installation makes the whole actuality of life and museum become alike, being transformable and fluctuant. In short, disturbing and dislocating spatial and contextual meanings of the museum system by orderly hoarding is a key idea of Kabakov's archival art.

I now turn my focus to the indiscriminately accumulated items in *The Garbage Man* again and to what these assembled fragments of garbage are saying. The garbage man makes the following claim:

A dump not only devours everything, preserving it forever, but one might say it also continually generates something: this is where some kinds of shoots come from new projects, ideas, a certain enthusiasm arises, hopes for the rebirth of something, though it is well-known that all of this will be covered with new layers of garbage.⁴⁵

In his world of rubbish archive, all items have an equal significance and there are no major events that weave the central storyline. It is an attempt at documenting every detritus of life rather than selecting memorable facts or moments. The man's orderly hoarding rejects conformity and uniformity and respects diversity among layers and layers of garbage, fostering polyphonic rhythms of ideas and stories among them. The geography of garbage collection is revitalised and reconnected through new materials of everyday detritus being added to again

⁴⁴ Kabakov's works began to be introduced in the West with the fall of Communism in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The Soviet Union was dissolved in 1991.

⁴⁵ Groys et al., op. cit., 1998, p. 103.

and again. The everyday dump continues to exist through this endless adding. Kabakov himself actually lived like a garbage man in his attic studio for years, obsessively accumulating garbage and archiving it in his own way. He stated that his artistic journey including *The Garbage Man* was in fact developed from the unexpected and strange encounters between different surroundings, which transformed into large installations.⁴⁶ Above all, Kabakov preferred to rework and recontextualise his earlier works and themes again and again so that new layers of temporal and spatial meanings could be rewritten and reborn from within.⁴⁷ In this revisiting process, the repetitive dynamism of creation is constantly facilitated.

Kabakov's personal collecting and confidentially creating unofficial works seem to be induced by repressive conditions of the Soviet society in order to indirectly overcome the restrictive mood and scope of activity. However, his orderly hoarding is not settled for running in circles of miserable surroundings and dismal memories but aims to become a transforming collection signifying a different criterion of value and nonvalue. Kabakov does not repeat the original situation of where he belonged to but creates his own new world built through this repetitive behaviour. Then, by way of exposing it to other societies, the artist transfers not only his personal memory but also collective memory of the society that are somewhat traumatic. Nonetheless, in Kabakov's orderly hoarding, the dislocated and discharged memory from the original context is not obsessed with returning to the absolute origin of that trauma but moves forward to generate rather evolving stories with slippery and altered fragments of memory.

Coming from a different angle, Christian Boltanski is keener to gather identical items rather than heterogeneous, miscellaneous ones as Kabakov does. His metaphorical language of hoarding people's possessions silently yet powerfully generates a disturbing feeling of loss, absence, and oblivion, the origins of which are unattributed in the exhibition space. He puts the preserving system of archival organisations in question by stating that: "Preventing forgetfulness, stopping the disappearance of things and beings seemed to me a noble goal, but I quickly realised that his ambition was bound to fail, for as soon as we try to preserve something,

⁴⁶ Amei Wallach, *Ilya Kabakov: The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away*, New York: Abrams, 1996, p. 171.

⁴⁷ Groys et al., op. cit., 1998, pp. 74-76

we fix it. We can preserve things only by stopping life's course".⁴⁸ In order to paradoxically dramatise the lost and forgotten state of objects and beings within the preserving system, Boltanski uses an institutional form of repository, inventory, or the archive room. One of his works in an orderly hoarding manner can be witnessed from the quantitative collection of old clothes, *Storage Area of the Children's Museum* (1989). The piles of children's clothes are fully stacked on six-storey shelves. Although a number of particular items are neatly displayed, no archival arrangement or classification is recognised to inform of where they came from here. The uniqueness of the archived items is replaced by their ordinariness within the monotonous aggregation. Archived objects are in general supposed to be labelled and named to define their precise status and value within an archival system and supposed to offer certain clues for the reconstruction a past. However, in Boltanski's case, such expectation failing and malfunctioning is at stake. Simply, the archived items fail to have indexical significance and the individuality of each item is erased.⁴⁹ Merely the melancholic and void resonance of physical occupation heavily exists in the museum space, and endless images of empty garments urge viewers to envisage the absent owners of these items.

Hence, it can be said that the repetitive pattern of identical and anonymous accumulation in this piece denotes the eternal return of something lacking or missing. For Boltanski, used clothing is a special metonym for missing persons, which is equivalent to a dead body in his works.⁵⁰ In this sense, many of Boltanski's archival works including *Storage Area of the Children's Museum* remind us of the Holocaust, in which enumerated objects representing the victims of Nazi camps, were deprived of individual subjectivity. Ernst van Alphen indicates that even though some of Boltanski's works bear no direct relation to Jewish people or to the Holocaust, they still evoke its effect. To explain such indirect references, Alphen coined the term "Holocaust effect", which is the mode brought by the "re-enactment of

⁴⁸ Kynaston McShine (ed.), *The Museum as Muse*, exhibition catalogue, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1999, p. 91.

⁴⁹ Ernst van Alphen, *Staging the Archive: Art and Photography in the Age of New Media*, London: Reaktion Books, 2014, p. 77.

⁵⁰ Stephanie Cash, 'Christian Boltanski No Man's Land', *Art in America*, 4 May 2010, [Online] Available at: <http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/news/christian-boltanski-no-mans-land/>, Last accessed 13 March 2016.

a certain principle that defines the Holocaust”.⁵¹ In this regard, Boltanski’s orderly hoarding of ownerless clothing produces the Holocaust effect, haunting and disturbing rhythms to call into being non-existent beings and reconstructed memory again and again.

More overwhelming effects are re-enacted on a larger scale in Boltanski’s recent work, *No Man’s Land* (2010). (Fig. 2.1.6) Thirty tons of old clothing is what mainly formulates the massive landscape of this installation at Park Avenue Amory in New York. There are dozens of grid groups of clothes laid flat on the floor and a high mountain of assembled clothes at the centre stage. On the top of the mountain, a claw on the crane lifts up a random piece of clothing and drops it down haphazardly.⁵² As well as the power of quantitative material presence, sound and smell are equally essential components of the work. The whole space vibrates with the soundtracks of heartbeats – from Boltanski’s ongoing project, *The Archives of the Heart* (2005), where he collects digital recordings of human heartbeats. The heartbeat gives an impression of the perpetual sound archive that would exist beyond its provider’s lifespan. While viewers walk along the heaps of clothes, the latter gives off a certain remaining scent of somebody or an odour of death. The air in the room is thus filled with deathly smells and the living pulses of human lives. Nevertheless, nothing in the installation can be specified as representing specific individuals. There is a powerful presence of material, sound, and smell, yet the installation also has the presence of absence. This scene alluding to collective death inevitably recalls the Holocaust. However, Boltanski mentions that his work does not always necessarily represent the Holocaust. For people from Haiti, for example, it could be about victims of the catastrophic earthquake.⁵³ Furthermore, it could make us think about the tragic situation of a Syrian refugee camp. A giant crane-claw picking up arbitrary clothes at the centre can stand for the inhumane and brutal indifference of global communities who turn their faces away from the plight of refugees, who desperately fight a battle of life and death. The endlessly iterative accumulation of empty clothes is thus suggestive of any vain death caused by war, terrorism, crimes, and

⁵¹ Alphen, op. cit., 2014, p. 199. For further study of the Holocaust effect, see Ernst van Alphen, *Caught by History: Holocaust Effects in Contemporary Art, Literature, and Theory*, California: Stanford University Press, 1997.

⁵² Dorothy Spears, ‘Exploring Mortality with Clothes and a Claw’, *New York Times*, 9 May 2010, [Online] Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/10/arts/design/10boltanski.html?_r=1, Last accessed 14 March 2016.

⁵³ Sarah Rosenbaum-Kranson, ‘Interview: Christian Boltanski’, *Museo Magazine*, 2010, [Online] Available at: <http://www.museomagazine.com/CHRISTIAN-BOLTANSKI>, Last accessed 15 March 2016.

disaster on a global scale. In addition, it evokes how fleetingly and exhaustively those deaths are consumed by the media and subsequently forgotten. Repetitive exposure of tragic events as media consumables will be discussed again in the second section of this chapter.

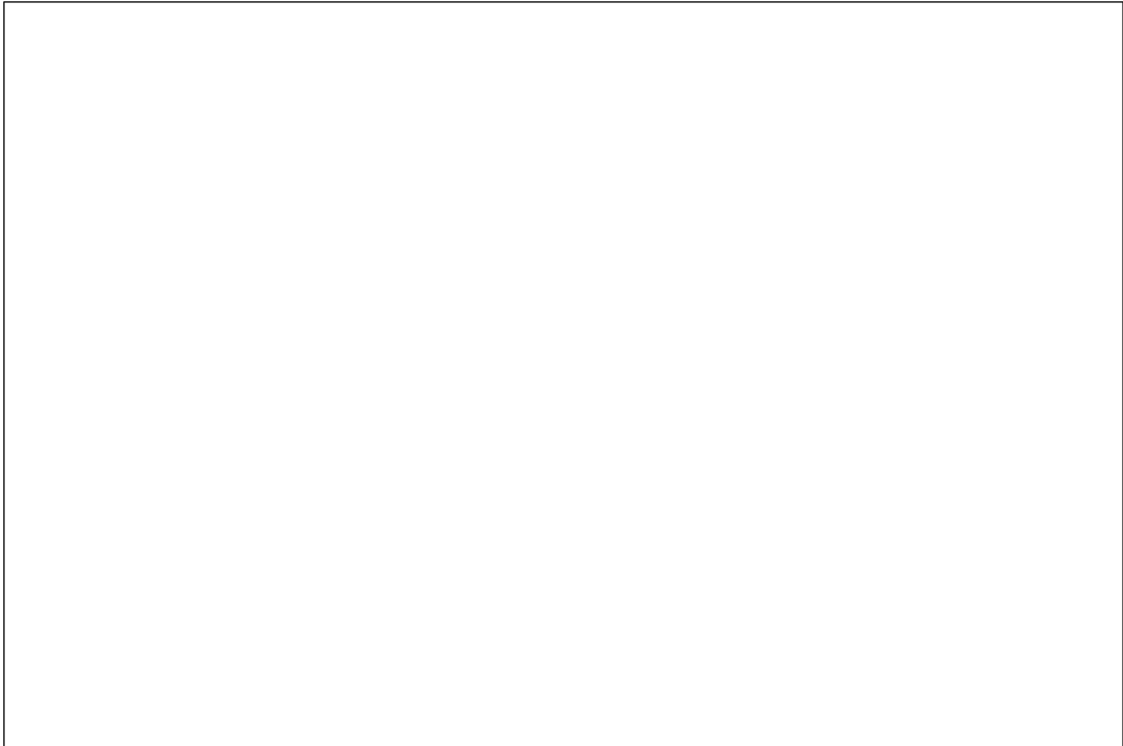


Figure 2.1.6. Christian Boltanski, *No Man's Land*, 2010, Park Avenue Amory New York

The “Holocaust effect” of Boltanski’s works extensively discloses a state of human torpor toward the vastness of death and its indiscriminate cruelty. It also critically questions institutional conserving systems that aim to grasp the present realities of the past and have direct access to it. Boltanski’s way of collecting sameness deters viewers from presenting or recollecting plausible narratives based on given archival clues. Rather, his orderly hoarding utilises the external structure to present well-arrayed material remnants from the past and simultaneously activates internal chaos or subversion undermining particular orders, causal relationships, and exclusiveness within collections. His strategy alternatively tends to visualise forgetfulness and disappearance, embodying as hopeless the archival capability of reifying each

item's identity and idiosyncrasy. In short, within the repetitive continuation of unnamed items, the presence of absence is intensely marked rather than that of the past.

To summarise, Kabakov and Boltanski devote their archival impulse to orderly hoarding. While Kabakov is keen on hoarding based on diversity, Boltanski gravitates to hoarding based on similarity. Both artists pursue to laboriously sort out their hoards in an unusual archival approach. They are mapping the fragmented layers of ordinary and abandoned objects, either displaying a non-hierarchical and resistant mode of waste archiving or accumulating a series of phantasmal and anonymous possessions in bulk. On one hand, Kabakov's waste archive promotes the listening to (or narrating of) unheard voices and marginalised values from the world of an everyday dump, interwoven with trivial bits of quotidian memories. On the other hand, Boltanski's eternal repetition of the same disturbs imagination or the expectation of any possible hopes of regular archiving, instead summoning up existential absence or loss of which origins are opaque and lubricous. Both archives have in common the signification that their destination would never terminate, owing to forthcoming archival items being endlessly added and both tend not to retrospectively find the preserved origins as they were but rather to seek for transformational stories to come interwoven through archival accumulation. They, therefore, entail a sense of anarchival, uncertainty, precariousness, and infinity. I shall deal with Sisyphean archival works shaking the origin of memory in more detail, exploring the Freudian point of view and Derrida's critiques of it in the section '2.2. Repetition without Origin'.

Here, more critically, both artists' orderly hoardings could be considered to inherently involve a strategic paradox because their artistic archives are anyway exhibited within the museum system, which in itself represents a type of archive. Even though these bodies of work attempt to reverse the notions of useless waste and valuable heritage and to shake the institutional criteria of selection and preservation by performing their own archival act, the point is that all those endeavours still happen within the walls of archival organisations. This self-contradictory nature can be seen as one of the noticeable qualities of archival art. Although Hal Foster defines the orientation of archival art as poles ("institutive" – "destructive" and

“legislative” – “transgressive”), these seemingly irreconcilable features coexist in many types of archival art. Exploiting the principles of museological taxonomy and archival systems, archival art in an orderly hoarding manner is absorbed into a territory of cultural institutions. Being embedded within the subject of criticism, it externally mimics the outward forms of conventional archives. In fact, the ultimate goal of this disguised penetration of archival art seems to erode the very operation of the institution itself by iteratively producing the abnormal and ruptured rhythms within and this paradoxical effect gradually threatens the symbolic order of museum structure and authority, as if a real hoarding behaviour in actuality jeopardises normal rhythms and conditions of living. With regard to this, Christine Bernier points out that a certain branch of archival works rather seems to be in favour of merging with the institutions, through which the vulnerable systems of both cultural institutions and art practices are exposed.⁵⁴ In other words, this inevitable reliance between art and institutions happens and the consequential result of each aim seems to be ironically irreconcilable. Perhaps, the essence of orderly hoarding practices can be found precisely within such a collusion, which entails self-reflective and self-evidentiary ways of critiques. Ultimately, this is why Sisyphean archival art can be considered mimetic yet subversive, institutive yet destructive, legislative yet transgressive, and archival yet anarchival. Next, I shall focus on Sisyphean artists who are strategically using an archival language and its administrative procedure as visual references or patterns. The following works mirroring each function of cultural institution and archival art tend to reveal vulnerability, limitedness, and torpor of each party’s own performance.

Repetitive Listing and Failing in Bureaucratic Archiving

While the conventional repetition of institutional performance reinforces the existing pattern, logic, and principle of its own system, artistic archives based on repetitive strategies do not contribute to defining existing archival systems as grand narratives but to questioning the reliability and power of it and rupturing preserved memory. In order to deeply investigate the paradoxical coalition between archival art and institution, I shall examine how the standardised

⁵⁴ Bernier, op. cit., p. 60.

archival system has historically been built and solidified and further suggest how unusual rhythms of repetition in artistic archives have encroached the administration and bureaucracy of cultural institutions. This study would give an insight into how Sisyphean archives generate eccentric orders within institutions, suggesting an offbeat route to reading archives and archiving as a social system and power.

The modern concept of archives was inherited from the nineteenth century. The authoritarian, bureaucratic, objectified “archivisation” of that century was ambitiously realised as an ideal dream of total control for social memory and national history.⁵⁵ The significance of the archive in the modern era can be characterised as the means by which “repositories of factual knowledge” are stored and “objectively verifiable facts” are accumulated.⁵⁶ Such an archival discourse has been developed alongside modern history and historiography on the basis of the historical positivism of the nineteenth century. Historians had strong beliefs in linear time and the neutrality of historical narratives, based on credulity towards a set of archives conveying factual, objective historical knowledge. These concepts of archives have been dismantled and contested by post-structural thinkers and constantly revisited and reinvented by artists from the twentieth century to the present. I shall examine later in more detail how the project of modern historiography combined with European colonialism sought comprehensive knowledge and a coherent history through building up official state archives. At this stage, I shall first illuminate how artists’ usage of archival language and bureaucratic aesthetics could be realised in a versatile way in order to emasculate such positivism and authoritarianism.

Thanks to the artists’ challenging questions and art practices, more critical and flexible views of archives have been suggested. One such suggestion is that the boundaries of the archive should neither be considered fixed nor be considered neutral but be seen as shifting and transformable. Nevertheless, the paradigm of modern archives developed in the nineteenth century still considerably affects contemporary archives in terms of their exteriority and

⁵⁵ Spieker, *op. cit.*

⁵⁶ Alphen, *op. cit.*, 2014, p. 42.

operation. It still pervades the ways in which the past is written about, how visible and invisible politics and power of institutions are exerted, how archival systems and technology are managed, and how knowledge is controlled today. Pierre Nora famously articulated:

Modern memory is, above all, archival. It relies entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image. What began as writing ends as high fidelity and tape recording. The less memory is experienced from the inside the more it exists only through its exterior scaffolding and outward signs – [...] The imperative of our epoch is not only to keep everything, to preserve every indicator of memory – even when we are not sure which memory is being indicated – but also to produce archives.⁵⁷

Our epoch is indeed archival, feverishly producing archives. Commonly, personal and collective information is accumulated and managed in the form of files and dossiers in public and governmental records. What we call social and cultural memories in actuality consist of rows and rows of archival documents and boxes that constitute the enormous storehouse beyond immediate comprehensibility.⁵⁸ Besides, in the age of new media, the scope and volume of archiving has explosively expanded because individuals also actively get involved with their own archival impulse and memory projects using prevalent digital media technology and digital platforms. Quantitative accumulation and obsessive production of archives are a phenomenal sign of archive fever today. Artists are, of course, engaged in this fever and their works then tend to blur the borders between artistic archives and institutional archives as having been explored in the earlier sections above. The bureaucratic exteriority of artists' works is often indistinguishable from that of institutional practices. Then, what does this endless archival production mean and how do artists make the best use of archival bureaucracy – administrative listing, ordering, controlling, and managing – in their practices? The artists' intervention seems not to address memorial or historical representation embedded in the archive but to

⁵⁷ Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire', translated by Marc Roudebush, in *Representations*, No. 26, Spring, 1989, pp. 13-14.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

performatively disclose a certain kind of effect, dissimulating its ultimate intention and destabilising regulatory circumstances of archival culture.

The *One Million Years* series (Fig. 2.1.7) by On Kawara (1932–2014) consists of two works: *One Million Years - Past* (1969) that begins at 998031 BC and ends at 1969 AD, and *One Million Years - Future* (1981) that starts from 1981 and goes up to 1001980 AD.⁵⁹ The works from this series altogether constitute 20 volumes of loosely bound books, stored in a cardboard archive box. The small prints of years in black are neatly stacked side by side on each page. These consecutively typed years are seemingly endless. The thickness of their physical appearance heavily conveys a typical encyclopaedic form of the archival record or of knowledge accumulation. While flipping through a few pages, thousands of years can speedily be experienced without being able to be identified.⁶⁰ The sense of time becomes pale and plain, as the enumerated years quickly pass by in the turn of a few pages. In fact, the printed words on paper are going to become fainter as well, because they were printed at a copy shop using a common office print toner and this medium is unstable and inappropriate for the purpose of long-term storage. Thus, Kawara anticipated that they would eventually disappear in the future.⁶¹ By recording the last one million years and the next million years that followed, within the real space of a book continued in separate volumes, he transformed the immaterial concept of time and the human capacity to grasp it into an abstract but visible form.⁶² The archival effort to reconstruct an immensurable passage of time in “its system of accumulation and disappearance” is what fails to be established here. In other words, an indefinite accumulation of time and knowledge in the present form of the archive, as finitude, is impossible. This archival mimicking piece not only literally mocks failure and impermanence of the preservation system but also visibly makes sceptical comments about the faith we have in it.

⁵⁹ Ingrid Schaffner and Matthias Winzen (eds.), *Deep Storage: Collecting, Sorting, and Archiving in Art*, Prestel, 1998, p. 178.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ James Putnam, *Art and Artifact: The Museum as Medium*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2009, p. 60.

⁶² Anne Rorimer, ‘The Date Paintings of On Kawara’, in Karel Schampers(ed.), *On Kawara: Date Paintings in 89 Cities*, exhibition catalogue, Rotterdam: Museum Boymans-Van Beuningen, 1992, p. 227.



Figure 2.1.7. On Kawara, *One Million Years*, 2009, David Zwirner Gallery New York

Uriel Orlow (b. 1973), in his *Housed Memory* (2000–2005), deals more radically with historical and mnemonic failure in the overwhelming amount of archival accumulation. The administrative consequence of repetition is more visibly intensified. *Housed Memory* is a nine-hour long video work filmed along all the shelves of the Wiener Library collection. This library is one of the oldest Holocaust archives in the world, in which materials pertaining to the Holocaust, genocide, and Fascism, as well as eyewitness accounts of related events are included. It was built in Germany by Dr Alfred Wiener during the 1920s and was then transferred to London in 1939.⁶³ In the video, Orlow focused on documenting the archive itself: its material presence and physicality. The seemingly endless tracking shot pans all the contents of the entire archive and simultaneously records people's voices at the library talking about their research or about related documents. The nine-hour long running time covers a considerable amount of the collection and the linear flow of the camera movement (or of time) continues to detect stored material shelf by shelf, which might otherwise have been hidden

⁶³ The Wiener Library, 'Our History', [Online] Available at: <http://www.wienerlibrary.co.uk/Our-History>, Last accessed 7 July 2016.

from view. The angle of the camera, however, merely reveals the titles on the book spines and labels on the archival boxes, as if there is no interest in showing the contents.

Orlow once discussed this work, questioning himself: “[...] how to do justice to such a collection and by implication to the subject matter it covers, if both the historical event itself and the amount of archival material which documents it are ungraspable in their enormity?”⁶⁴ Orlow’s self-questioning echoes Giorgio Agamben’s argument of “the aporia of Auschwitz”.⁶⁵ For Agamben, there is a discrepancy between the given historical facts about Auschwitz and the real truth. In other words, such an unforgettable and unimaginable historical event may be verifiable through factual elements but it is not always comprehensible.⁶⁶ The sheer size of archival presence, the archiving system, and its language would not guarantee portrayal of the true nature of these enormous historical facts: they still remain ungraspable, unthinkable, and unimaginable. This becomes more obvious when listening to an interview with a Holocaust survivor, who worked as a volunteer at the Wiener Library:

It’s so vast, the whole thing is so unthinkable. I found myself saying that I lived on another planet. So it’s a different language... and yet you’ve only got language. You’ve got to be careful not to over-sentimentalize. By that I mean that maybe the biggest drama is the lack of drama. Look at a book like the chronicle of the Lodz Ghetto and you’ve got entries that were done at the time for the future; day to day entries, as things were happening. In a way it becomes normal to say how many people have committed suicide, threw themselves from the bridge; or that there has been a deportation. Only by recording it like that, by showing that this was the norm of existence – you realise that the lack of drama is the whole drama. Make a list!⁶⁷

The scenes of moving along the shelves in *Housed Memory* repeatedly fade in and out at either the end or the start of each shelf. The tracking shot creates a series of discontinuous scenes,

⁶⁴ Uriel Orlow, ‘Latent Archives, Roving Lens’, in Jane Connarty and Josephine Lanyon (eds.), *Ghosting: The Role of the Archive within Contemporary Artists’ Film and Video*, exhibition catalogue, Bristol: Picture This Moving Image, 2006a, p. 38.

⁶⁵ Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen, New York: Zone Books, 1999, p. 12.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 41.

although using a linear line of camera movements.⁶⁸ The artist himself points out that this endless procession “produces a sense of the unknowable in the face of a totality which cannot be accessed”.⁶⁹ With regard to this, Michael Newman explains that Orlow’s filming strategy reveals this inaccessibility. The camera’s gaze moves along an infinite line of being concurrently continuous and discontinuous, while producing ruptures again and again and going nowhere.⁷⁰ Explicitly showing the physical continuum of the accumulative records in the archive ironically demonstrates the failure of its system per se, that is the necessary crisis of what it is supposed to represent: conveying the historical event from the past as it is at the present time.

Both Kawara and Orlow’s works portray the archive’s incapability to document immeasurable time and memory as a complete unity in a present moment. In Kawara’s case, his listing of past and future time imitates a typical bureaucratic procedure of archiving: recording linear times in a chronological order (or otherwise, the sheer number of chronology itself), using general office supplies of toner and print and binding books and presenting them as a series volume. Meanwhile, Orlow’s video recording documents an endless sense of archival physicality as it is, through which the enormity and severity of a historical event like the Holocaust is reduced to the mere monotonous procession of books, files, and boxes. Both works share a common interest in the repetitive performance of seriality, accumulation, and enumeration either in the numerical order of listing or in the use of visual images as listing. According to Ernst van Alphen, making a list is based on “the principle of etcetera” and “the principle of expandability”.⁷¹ It means that repetitive listing is always done in a temporary state that can be expanded continuously by additional etcetera and etcetera. Listing does not just function to create a complete order in a practical way but evokes the infinite, heading towards ungraspable expansion and openness.⁷² Therefore, the repetitive listing of printing numbers in

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 40.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Michael Newman, ‘Archive, Testimony, and Trace: Uriel Orlow’s *Hosed Memory*’, in Uriel Orlow et.al., *Uriel Orlow: Deposits*, Berlin & Sussex: Green Box, 2006b, p. 81.

⁷¹ Alphen, op. cit., 2014, pp. 97-98. To explain the nature of listing, Alphen cites Umberto Eco’s book, *The Infinite of Lists*, translated by Alastair McEwen, London: MacLehose Press, 2009.

⁷² Alphen, op. cit., 2014, p. 94.

Kawara's work and the repetition of filming successive images as listing in Orlow's film successfully perform the failure of historical and mnemonic representation in achieving totality, perfection, and closure. When material substitutes of times and memories are accumulated in the form of archives, a comprehensive listing is supposed to be made in order to maximise its administrative efficiency. However, Kawara and Orlow only mark this typical system and procedure of the archival act as bureaucratic aesthetics and meticulously repeat the tasks set out for them. While a certain bureaucratic procedure is repeated to produce a dominating system and official narratives, both artists playing the roles of archivists do not intend to propose commemorative, describable, and productive meanings from what they are doing. Instead, they dramatise a sense of infinite listing and its temporary and expandable quality. In short, their failing journeys administered by the archival/anarchival performance of the endlessly repetitive listing implies that the material condition of the archive is not everlasting or fixed to have a hegemony over a certain way of writing history and memory but on the move causing a continuous hiatus within systems.

Furthermore, visualising the archive's torpor, these two works demonstrate the vastness of time's passage and how traumatic events from the past "delimit us" in a Foucauldian sense. For Foucault, the archive means neither the sum of historical documentation nor the physical space where those texts are stored. It is a discursive formation of "the law of what can be said" so that it is impossible for us to describe our own archive at the present time.⁷³ As time is outside our archival language and systems of archiving, it is necessary for us to be separated from the archive through chronological time and distance, in order for it to be analysed more sharply.⁷⁴ Hence, for the analysis of the archive at a distance, variations of statements in the different categories of discourses should be sought in Foucault's method. In doing so, totality and finitude in any social discourse should be undermined and the immanent power operating in any social system, like the archive, should be critically questioned. While the Wiener Library is a physical location containing documented memories of the Holocaust, Orlow's video work

⁷³ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, translated by A.M. Sheridan Smith, London and New York: Routledge, 2002, pp. 145-146.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

is “an archive of the archive” like a meta-archive, embodying a growing memory in itself.⁷⁵ His intention is to witness and record the site and the people who stop by there. Orlow’s archive unveils the naked scene and emphasises the exterior scaffolding of the archive, which stimulates repetitive rhythms to produce the reverse effect of disturbing its physical condition and of eventually being anarchival with a feeling of burnout.

Both artists’ anarchival performativity of repetition demonstrates the failure of archives to capture the event, which is uncontainable and vaster than any individual or collective agency. Namely, their self-reflective attempts at showing failing moments of archives point out to the loophole of the institutionalised archival system. Nonetheless, their works also simultaneously reconfirm the archival performativity of bureaucratic repetition and enhance both the archival structure as exterior and the operational principle as interior, thus gaining a certain kind of ruling authority. The ways in which the archive is physically and routinely sorted out, managed, and licensed controls everyday life. Indeed, no power can be imagined without an underlay of files and documents in any social and cultural institution today. Whether it is failure or not, the archive is still the most widely used form of record-keeping as a governing framework in society. In a similar sense, Foucault argues that all social mechanisms in the modern era, including the archive, operate through power, and Derrida claims that the archive is a site of political power. The archive brings about the issue of authoritative hierarchy in which one manipulated vision can be officially manifested. There are artistic endeavours that amount to a shaking of such authoritative control and the bureaucratic rigidity inscribed in the archive. Voluntarily imitating (or relying on) exteriority and language of institutional and bureaucratic archives, the artists below intervene in the given context and authority and their individual and idiosyncratic archives represent a mode of resistance to such power operation in the institutional territory.

Frederico Câmara (b.1971) created a photography project, *Inside/Out* (2006) (Fig. 2.1.8), which was a series of images set-up inside the archive during his fellowship at the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds. Câmara’s images show various types of strong rooms in archives and

⁷⁵ Orlow, op. cit., 2006a, p. 40.

museums as well as the sculpture stores and libraries to which limited access is allowed to authorised persons only. Those places are a type of “non-space, generally unseen, in which the locked-up items play a silent waiting game, sitting in readiness to be chosen”.⁷⁶ Victoria Lane, archivist of the Henry Moore Institute, recalls that Câmara’s unusual visit (or intervention) evoked the typical role and function of the archive as an off-stage room. This is because what Câmara asked for was “a security risk” that could result in failure to protect sensitive materials or confidential files from exposure through a camera.⁷⁷ One of his documentary photographs includes a scene of the abandoned library entitled *Old Library* (2006), which explicitly uncovers “the accident of a broken, disused store”.⁷⁸ By exposing the hollow centre of disused archive rooms, the power that is commenced and commanded within those places is emptied. In addition, the enlarged picture, once installed outside the institute for the exhibition, creates a peculiar resonance by turning the secret space inside into a public spectacle. His intervention into those closed spaces and their subsequent photographic reproduction opens up a visual and conceptual way to access the unpermitted sites by subverting them into liminal spaces or thresholds. Nevertheless, what he represents within his “reportage”⁷⁹ does not have any indexical function to indicate which specific events are happening in that space. In these dispassionate images, the archontic power is discharged: the mythic qualities of the institution are dislocated, decentred, and failed.

⁷⁶ Victoria Lane, ‘The Artist in the Archive: Frederico Câmara’, in Judy Vaknin et al. (eds.), *All This Stuff: Archiving the Artist*, Oxfordshire: Libri Publishing, 2013, pp. 89-90.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 91.

⁷⁹ Stephen Feeke, ‘Beauty and the Beast’, *Leeds (Partial View)* exhibition essay, [Online] Available at: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/27117405/Beauty-and-the-Beast>, Last accessed 26 May 2014, n.p.



Figure 2.1.8. Frederico Câmara, *Inside/Out*, 2006, Installation View, Henry Moore Institute
Leeds

Similarly, Andrea Fraser (b.1965) exhibited a site-specific installation at the Bern Kunsthalle that mimicked the behind-the-scenes of museum archives, entitled *Information Room* (1998). Fraser’s installation deliberately turned an inaccessible archive into the public space of a gallery. The initial idea that she proposed was to move the entire archive of the Kunsthalle to the gallery and cause it to be rearranged, via public access, in a “haphazard” manner.⁸⁰ The archival boxes sat on the floor and people opened these boxes, pulled out the materials, looked through them, and then placed them back wherever they wanted. Another idea for *Information Room* was of installing the entire library in the gallery, where all the books would be displayed on the bookshelves with their spines to the wall, and some posters would be attached to the walls behind the shelves. People could have free access to the books displayed

⁸⁰ Karin Prätorius and Anika Hausmann, ‘Questions for Andrea Fraser’, in Beatrice von Bismarck et al. (eds.), *Interarchive: Archival Practices and Sites in the Contemporary Art Field*, Cologne: Walther König, 2002, p. 86.

in order but would not be able to predict what they would select before randomly pulling them out. Fraser describes her work as “a Cageian information room”. She states: “I wanted to make a Cageian information room where all information would be available but access to it would be rendered arbitrary, accidental”.⁸¹ The scene of staging failure here is that of inverting the traditional methods of archiving and the manipulative selection criteria of institutions into “clutter and disorder”.⁸² Public participants who intervene in the scene continuously gather information by chance. This consequent series of unexpected rhythms is generatively played to deconstruct the standardised archival rules and orders and to facilitate a mutual, unconstrained communication between the given archive and its users. Fraser’s alternative archive suggests that the public’s intervention in and transformation of the institutional archive results in “a concomitant tendency toward entropy and chaos”.⁸³ Such iterative accumulation of failing and chaotic moments is one of the aspects of archiving to which Sisyphean archival art can be devoted – arbitrary rules employed, chance and contingency unexpectedly encountered, ruptures and gaps disclosed within the institutional archives, and thus new orders suggested in the midst of disorder again and again.

If Câmara and Fraser attempt to turn the symbolic order of existing archives inside out, Sasa [44] (b.1973) rather creates his own counter archive, *Annual Report (2006–2013)* (Fig. 2.1.9), following a bureaucratic form of comprehensive report. The usual annual report is made in order to evaluate the institution’s yearly activities and outcomes. Unlike its title’s impression, the report of Sasa [44] is in fact an artist’s personal documentary in which his daily routines are accumulated and listed. A series of daily traces themselves become collectible objects such as newspapers, receipts, albums, cinema tickets etc. Sasa [44] subsequently counted and analysed these collected records of life: how many bowls of Korean ox’s bones broth and of black bean sauce noodles he consumed; how many times he made phone calls, bank transactions, and used

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Spieker, op. cit., p. 180.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 182.

a transportation card; how many guests visited his studio etc.⁸⁴ These statistics are shown as data visualisations of lists, bar charts, graphs, and diagrams by months or years in the reports. Through the analysis of these data, the artist's life pattern and daily habits are digitised. Once his unofficial daily performance and research have been formally published as an official form of report, its data flow of everydayness speaks for itself to address the relationship between personal and public records, the individual and society, and value and nonvalue.

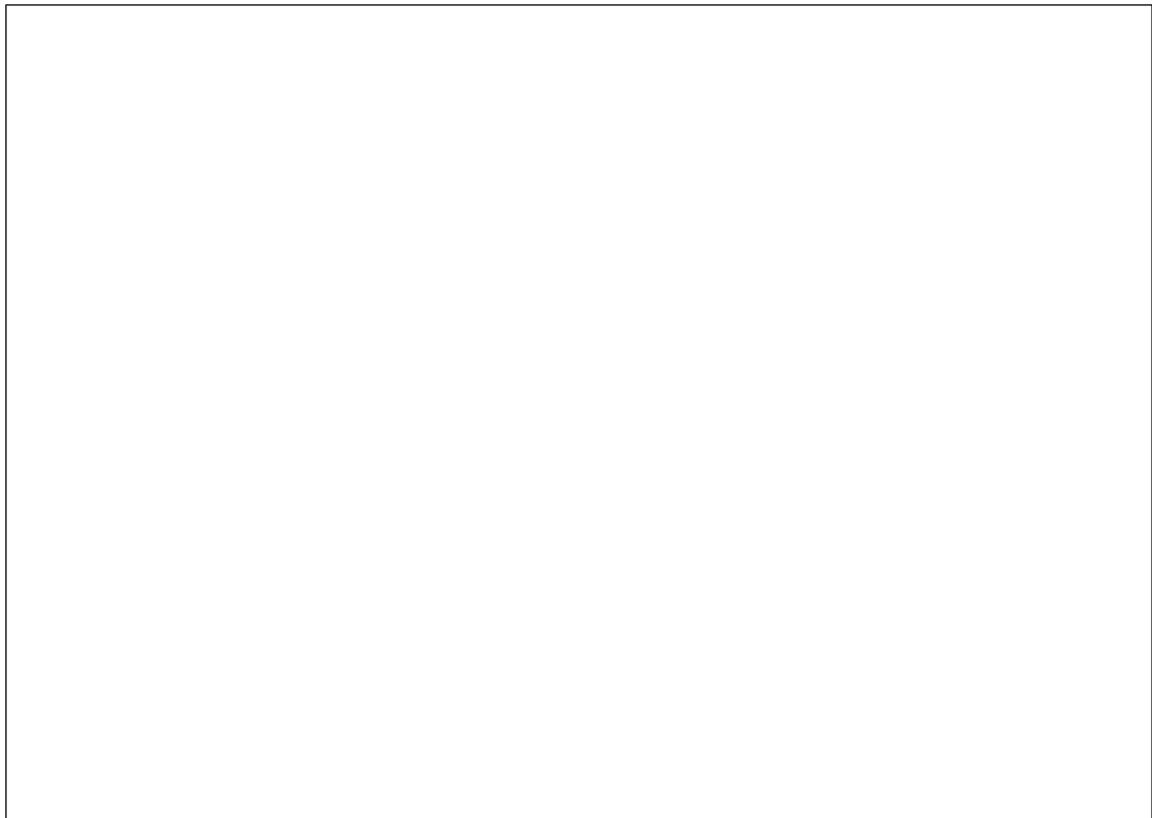


Figure 2.1.9. Sasa [44], *Annual Report*, 2010, Front and Back Covers, © Specter Press

Interestingly, what Sasa [44] uses as his method is “big data” analytics, which is a distinctive analytical tool in the digital age. Within a computer-based society, the quantity and speed of information is growing faster than ever before which demands new technologies of processing and analysing the massive volume of data. The idea is to examine the sets of data in

⁸⁴ SeMA editorial team, *SeMA Blue 2014: Malfunction Library*, exhibition catalogue, Seoul Museum of Art, 2014, p. 91.

a nonlinear and non-hegemonic manner as a means by which hidden patterns and social trends are extracted and new correlations and values are predicted.⁸⁵ In the 2000s, starting from the realm of science, big data research and analysis are migrating into the expanded fields of governmental administration, business marketing, industry etc.⁸⁶ It is a newly emerged insight into reading, interpreting, and producing knowledge of the digital world. Sasa [44] applies this up-to-date technology to process his private records. The artist's independent archival act and analytic method suggest an alternative kind of knowledge accumulation and distribution. The whole research process in data analysis and visualisation captures the typical banality of one's daily trajectory, but it also significantly speaks of how the archiving of personal life can be publicly realised and communicated. Moreover, the annual report of Sasa [44] can be regarded as a new type of self-portrait or autobiography, deduced from a digital algorithm, as dealing with the bombardment of information happening today on a personal level. The artist's work is a sort of performative evidence that shows how the individual insists to be remembered, recognised via documentation (or resists being forgotten) and to challenge how his endeavour can affect the existing orders, political power, and bureaucratic inflexibility within the institutional archiving system. The challenge of Sasa [44] ultimately reveals nominal control and authority of institutional activities through highly personalised and trivialised artistic archives.

To summarise, those series of Sisyphean archival works of orderly hoarding, repetitive listing, and voluntary intervention in the institutional archives defamiliarise the exclusiveness of institutional archives. When their performative research actively engages in any archive, the existing museological criteria of selection and preservation are being disturbed and the absolute origin of the restricted place where political power operating in the archive is commenced and commanded is being voided. Nevertheless, the coalition between archival art and institutions is inevitable. Such archival works would not be able to exist without the context of institutions

⁸⁵ Viktor Mayer-Schönberger and Kenneth Cukier, *Big Data: A Revolution that will Transform How We live, Work, and Think*, London: John Murray, 2013, p. 6.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

and institutions cannot help but embrace these kinds of works that contaminate the foundation of their existence because they have a cultural duty to discern and document the front line of contemporary artistic interests and research.

If the external patterns of repetition have been examined in the first section of the chapter, 'Repetition as Accumulation', the internal domain of repetition will be better illuminated in the following section highlighting the ramification of diverse ideas of repetition. By doing so, the interactive relation between external and internal forces (or visible or invisible forces) of repetition can be more richly mapped out.

2.2. REPETITION WITHOUT ORIGIN

As I briefly mentioned in the last part, the archival/anarchival performativity of repetition in Sisyphean archival art can be explained against the background of the nineteenth century. In this section, I would like to scrutinise the culture of the nineteenth century in the West because there were major changes in many domains that directly and indirectly affected the formulation of material and immaterial conditions of the archive: Freudian psychoanalysis began to explore the unconscious mind, photography as a reproductive medium was invented, and European imperialistic idealism of knowledge control was feverishly expanded across the world during this era. The archival mentality as an aspect of modernity developed together with such paradigm shifts. Its historical and cultural remnants or legacies as dominating discourses have been exercised until today in many realms. As a mode of resistance and an alternative, the archival/anarchival impulse gradually appearing in twentieth and twenty-first century art tends to shake the established foundation of any theories or discourses in various ways.

While I mainly follow those three momentums of the nineteenth century – psychoanalysis, photography, and imperialism – I shall show how Sisyphean artists repetitively vacate the firmly secured and centred position of such grand narratives in their practices. This would suggest the ways in which the absolute memory and power as origin in the archive are more intensely deconstructed and the hegemonic methods and narratives in history writing, repeated by external existing systems and officially established archival structure are dismantled. Having evolved from this critical approach to the nineteenth century's achievements, Sisyphean archival art now responds to more sophisticated global phenomena like mass media culture, accelerated digitisation of knowledge, postcolonial states, terrorism threat, multinational migration, and contemporary symptoms of a memory crisis. I shall particularly examine the current digital media environment that affects the capacity of human memory and discuss emerging issues around digital archives as mnemonic mastery or oblivion as well.

Freud's Repetition and Derrida's Archive Fever

As famously known, Derrida refutes the Western obsession with finding beginnings, starting places, and origins.⁸⁷ Perhaps, the archive works to mediate such obsessions. However, Derrida finds that searching for origins is impossible and defines it as a sickness. His deconstructive reading of Freudian impressions through the archive and psychoanalysis reflects his critique of representation and grand narratives as such in general, eventually leading him to argue that the archive is inherently incapable of grasping the past and its origin but rather its doomed archival hope can be found in the future. With regard to this point, Derrida critically associates the repetition compulsion with the archive, discussing the nature of the archive as “archive fever”. Derrida argues that the archive and Freudian psychoanalysis are inextricably tied up with archive fever: a returning force back to the very first moment. Alongside Freud's study of repetition and Derrida's critique of it, the works of the Sisyphean artists give us a persuasive explanation to read the anarchival performativity of repetition. Their practices call our attention to the deconstructive relationship between repeating and finding origins in memory and archives.

In order to understand the point of Derrida's archive fever and to examine a versatile range of Sisyphean archival art further, it is necessary to consider the idea of repetition in the light of Sigmund Freud's theory first. What is particularly exhibited here is Freud's concept of repetition compulsion associated with the death drive. His theory, concerning the primary energy of repetition as a defence mechanism of the human psyche suggests the importance of repetition itself. Freud's study consequently contributed to paving the way for further possibilities to rethink the compelling power of repetition as the nature of the human psyche. Since Freud, the death drive, established by repetition compulsion, has been recognised as a “universal attribute” of all organisms, which is the initial catalyst to propel convergent and critical thoughts about repetition.

⁸⁷ Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002, p. 5. For further study of Derrida's thought on origins fever, Derrida, *Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.

For Freud, “repetition compulsion” is the essential component to understand the human psyche. When a patient repeats a particular behaviour related to a traumatic event or recalls its painful circumstances again and again, Freud in his therapy explores what the patient has repressed or forgotten in the past and traces its origin. For Freud, the original marks of any memory are certainly left somewhere in our unconscious mind, which is a prerequisite for the induction of the compulsion to repeat. He first introduces this concept in ‘Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through’ and develops it further in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Freud delineates the paradoxical aspect of repetitive behaviour – the mind reacting to a frightening trauma by repeating it in spite of it causing an unpleasurable state. However, this contradicted Freud’s previous claim that our psychic processes are automatically regulated by the pleasure principle – “gaining pleasure and avoiding unpleasure”.⁸⁸ It should be remarked that Freud makes crucial psychological comments on how this incompatible phenomenon is related to the pleasure principle. For instance, repeating the traumatic events in dreams or therapy is a protective mechanism following a sudden “shock”. The patient attempts to take “control over the [external] stimuli *retrospectively* [original emphasis]” and to master it by confronting himself with the original situation and “generating fear”.⁸⁹ Likewise, Freud’s grandson played a “fort(gone)/da(here) game”, who repeatedly threw his toy and then reeled it back in again with a joyful “da!”. This is the child’s re-enactment of his mother’s absence and presence in his repetitive play, through which he “exchanges his passive role in the actual situation for an active role within the game” and ultimately gains control and thus pleasure.⁹⁰ Freud sees this “eternal recurrence of the same” as the “fate compulsion”, which eventually leads him to justify “the hypothesis of a compulsion to repeat; and [it] appears to us to be more primal, more elemental, more deeply instinctual than the pleasure principle” but nonetheless is “independent of it”.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Sigmund Freud, ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle’, 1920, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Other Writings*, translated by John Reddick, London: Penguin Classics, 2003, p. 71.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61, 71.

From such a problematic compulsion to repeat, Freud derives his notion of the “death drive”. He takes notice of the inherent drive of all organic life: “every living organism to restore a prior state” and thus, for intrinsic reason, “the goal of all life is death”.⁹² With this theorisation of the death drive, Freud withdraws his original thesis of ego drives and sexual drives being antithetical, now both recognised as “being libidinal”.⁹³ What he later calls libidinal instincts belong to the “life drive (Eros)”, while repetition compulsion is associated with the “death drive (Thanatos)”.⁹⁴ According to this new theory, the existence of the death drive is the dominant tendency of the psyche and of all individuals’ life processes in general to equilibrate inner stimulative tension and to maintain life at a steady level.⁹⁵ Hence, the self-preservation drive of the life instinct and the self-destructive nature of the death instinct that manifests in the compulsion to repeat are concurrent and opposing at the same time in order to keep all life alive. Following on from this line of thought, Freud theorises such destructive impulses towards death as a prior realm “beyond” the pleasure principle.

Derrida deduces his idea that the archive is sustained by archival and anarchival qualification from this Freudian concept of the human psyche, upheld by the inherently contradictory drives of preservation and destruction. Based on the Freudian death drive driven by repetition compulsion, the archive fever that Derrida defines is the repetitive sickness of anarchival destruction and the ceaseless desire for origins. In this line of thought, for Derrida, the theory of psychoanalysis itself is not only a theory of memory but of the archive.⁹⁶ He assumes that the entire concept of Freudian psychoanalysis is about the form of archival memorisation, inscription, and reproduction, which is troubled with archive fever. Interestingly, Freud’s hypothesis of memory is based on the archival implications of storing traces of the past and his study of psychoanalysis relies on the archival act of taking notes and keeping patients’ records and files.⁹⁷ Freud himself does not explicitly use the term “archive” for his descriptions, but suggested an archival metaphor for the analysis of the patient by mentioning phrases such

⁹² Ibid., p. 78.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 91.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 92.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 95.

⁹⁶ Derrida, *op. cit.*, 1996, p. 19.

⁹⁷ Spieker, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-36.

as “a linear chronological order within each separate theme”, “examining a dossier”, “files of memories”, and “similar memories into collections arranged in linear sequences”.⁹⁸

In particular, Derrida analysed Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi’s book, *Freud’s Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*, reflecting on how Freud’s project of psychoanalysis is related to archive fever.⁹⁹ Derrida regards Freud as someone who repeated the patriarchal logic and illuminated the archontic principle of the archive, by pointing out that “paternal and patriarchic, [a] principle only posited itself to repeat itself and returned to re-posit itself only in parricide”.¹⁰⁰ In the analysis of *Freud’s Moses*, Derrida picks up Yerushalmi’s argument that psychoanalysis is a Jewish science. With the contemplation of Freud’s controversial writing *Moses and Monotheism*, Yerushalmi traces psychoanalysis back to Judaism and Jewish identity, specifically starting from one particular document, the Hebrew inscription in Freud’s family Bible. On Freud’s thirty-fifth birthday, his father Jacob Freud gave the Bible to his son with a note in it “as a memorial and as a reminder of love”, which reminded Freud of his familial roots and his Jewish cultural and religious heritage, according to Yerushalmi.¹⁰¹ Derrida is specifically interested in Yerushalmi’s attempt to archive the history of psychoanalysis through the recovery of this familial trace, i.e. to recover a particular archival origin handed down from father to son.¹⁰² This is where the archive fever operates and this is also the very moment that the archontic and authoritative power is established. Hence, for Derrida, Freud’s writings are bound up with archive fever, i.e. the desire to recoup moments of inception again and again: “Yet, psycho-analysis has been responsible for some of this trouble with archives, for it wants to *get back*: it manifests a desire for origins, to find the place where things started, before the regime of repetition and representation was inaugurated [original emphasis]”.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ Sigmund Freud, ‘The Psychotherapy of Hysteria’, 1895, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: Studies on Hysteria*, translated by James Strachey, Vol. 2 (1893–1895), London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1955, pp. 288–289.

⁹⁹ Steedman, op. cit., pp. 3–4.

¹⁰⁰ Derrida, op. cit., 1996, p. 95.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹⁰² Walker Sampson, ‘From My Archives: Derrida’s Archive Fever’, 10 April 2011, [Online] Available at: <http://wsampson.wordpress.com/2011/04/10/from-my-archives-derridas-archive-fever/>, Last accessed 26 February 2014.

¹⁰³ Steedman, op. cit., p. 7.

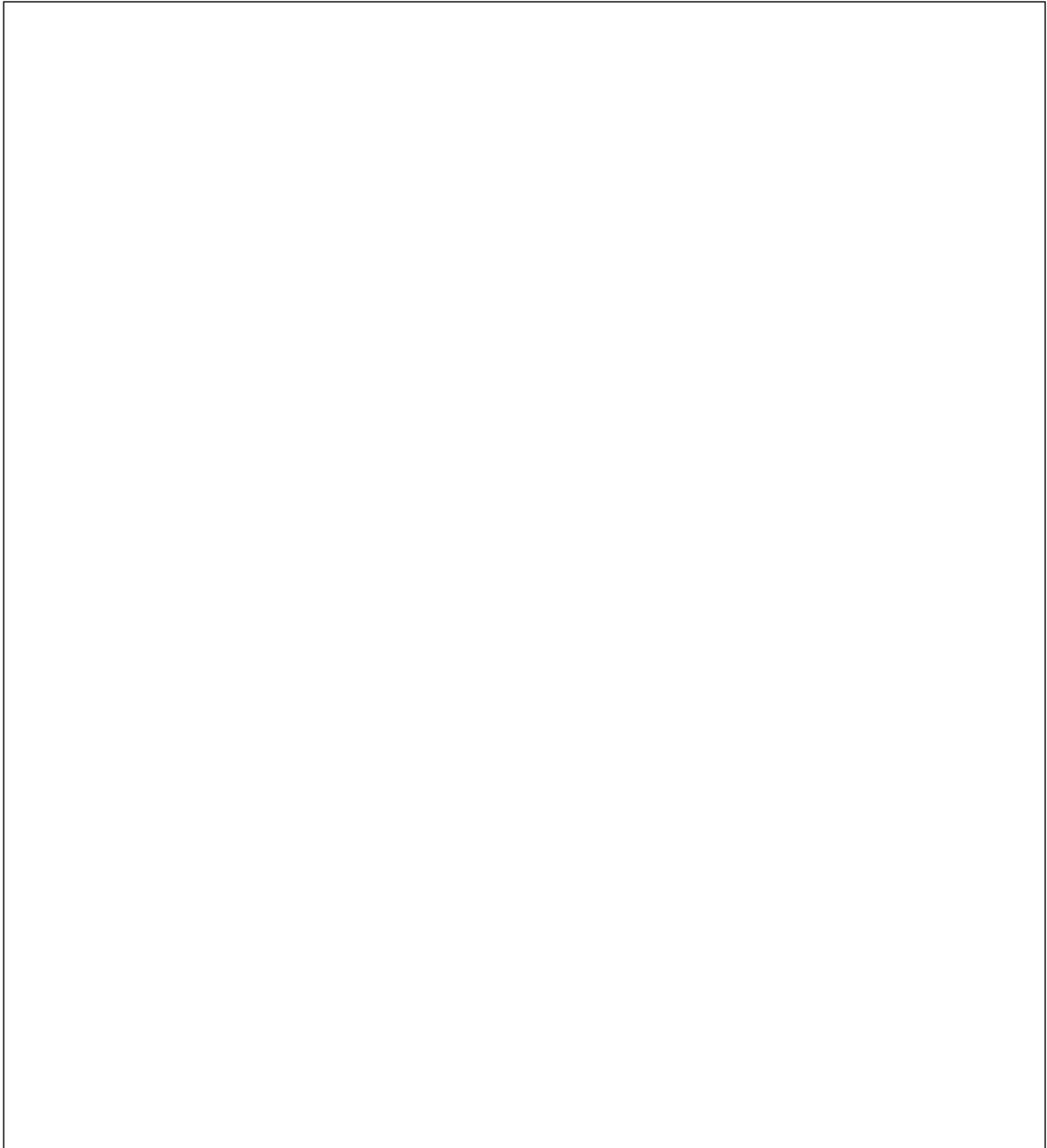


Figure 2.2.1. Jukhee Kwon, *From the book to the space*, 2014, October Gallery London

As Yerushalmi attempts to uncover the Jewish legacy passed through Freud's familial Bible, the form of a book is the prime example of knowledge accumulation and its transmission. Books as containers of knowledge can also be regarded as the most traditional symbol of memorisation, inscription, printing, and reproduction, from which the archival origin begins, and thus the archontic and patriarchal principle of the archive operates. Italy-based Korean artist Jukhee Kwon's (b. 1981) book sculptures literally destruct such a form and notion of

books. Kwon uses old books of the Western world and shreds each page by hand to create a waterfall-like sculpture with thousands of meticulous and fragile lines stemming from slicing, which are hanging down from book covers. Each book is transformed into a new object or a new existence through a destructive and repetitive process of cutting. Her work *Fromthebooktothespace* (2014) (Fig. 2.2.1) is made up of nine books of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, that is the oldest English version of the encyclopaedia still in production, initially published in 1768.¹⁰⁴ Through these books, the standardised knowledge of those who hold intellectual hegemony in the world is accumulated and disseminated. In Kwon's work, consisting of all the pages line by line and interwoven, the symbolic meaning of the encyclopaedia as a comprehensive and authoritative source of knowledge disintegrates. There is neither patriarchal order nor knowledge to deliver, much less any authority to assert. Instead, the artist's persevering performance of cutting and destroying only resonates in the final work and its repetitive energy is present in the transformed, dissected object as newly created.

Another work by Kwon, *The Book of Galileo* (2014), deals with the book of the father of modern science, Galileo Galilei.¹⁰⁵ Under the knife of the artist, Galileo's astronomical observation and its intellectual fruits inscribed in the book are shredded, fragmented, and pulled out towards the outside. The cascading paper water lays bare an established scientific theory and deconstructs its authoritative voice as a grand narrative. Kwon decentres the dominant position of big theories or Eurocentric narratives by visibly activating her own Sisyphian rhythms to defeat the sickness of archive fever, i.e. "to have a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement".¹⁰⁶ Kwon's work implies that returning to the absolute origin of any archive inevitably fails and the repressed rhythms of operative patriarchal authority are thereby deconstructed. Furthermore, Kwon's

¹⁰⁴ SeMA, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

¹⁰⁵ Pamela Kember, 'Artist Jukhee Kwon creates unique work for the Literature Festival', *Asia House*, 6 May 2014, [Online] Available at: <http://asiahouse.org/artist-jukhee-kwon-creates-unique-work-for-the-literature-festival/>, Last accessed 15 April 2016.

¹⁰⁶ Derrida, op. cit., 1996, p. 91.

creation, performed through archival/anarchival repetition and destruction, produces newly evolved and re-arranged meanings and interpretations of art objects and knowledge.¹⁰⁷

In addition, the Freudian pathological and patriarchal repetition is linked to finding the origin of trauma. The major premise of psychoanalysis is that nothing can be completely erased from the mind.¹⁰⁸ Freud emphasises that:

[...] Such as the repetitions of reactions dating from infancy and all that is indicated by the transference in connection with these repetitions. [...] All of the essentials [are] preserved; even things that seem completely forgotten are present somehow and somewhere, and have merely been buried and made inaccessible to the subject. Indeed, it may, as we know, be doubted whether any psychical structure can really be the victim of total destruction.¹⁰⁹

In relation to this, what Freud deals with is the invisible world of the unconscious mind where repressed memories, thoughts, and feelings are stored. Freud's analogy of the iceberg is famous for describing three levels of the mind.¹¹⁰ The conscious mind that can be seen as the tip of the iceberg is the most obvious part, through which all the mental processes that we are fully aware of happen, while the unconscious mind, like the invisible part of the iceberg, is inaccessible from the conscious mind. The unconscious is the primary part of the mind, where human instincts and memories are buried. Moreover, there is the preconscious mind between these two

¹⁰⁷ Kwon's act of destroying and decentering conjures up the previous artistic challenges of Gustav Metzger and John Latham. Metzger's auto-destructive and auto-creative works of art de-familiarised ordinary objects or circumstances, articulating that construction and creation are inevitably followed by destruction. John Latham also resisted the established theory and system of knowledge through physically and conceptually destroying and abusing books as sculptural objects. For instance, Latham's *Skoob Tower* (1966) was a performance event presenting towers of books such as encyclopaedias and magazines that were burnt and had perished as ash. Its title, *Skoob* stands for the term books, read backward. Moreover, the particular case of *Still and Chew* (1966) more explicitly addresses a radical resistance to the hegemonic and conventional voice of a particular knowledge. Together with his students, Latham notably bit pieces off the book of Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture* (1961) and put the remains in a phial after chemical treatments. He returned this contained "essence of Greenberg" to the library at St. Martin's School of Art where he had a teaching post. Owing to this event, Latham was fired from his job. See Robert J. Preece, 'Bookworks: A Conversation with Jukhee Kwon', *Sculpture*, Vol. 33, No. 2, International Sculpture Centre, March 2014, pp. 34-39, and Paul Moorhouse, 'And the World was Made Art: John Latham', *Tate Etc.*, issue 5, Autumn 2005, [Online] Available at: <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/and-word-was-made-art>, Last accessed 14 April 2016.

¹⁰⁸ Spieker, op. cit., p. 40.

¹⁰⁹ Sigmund Freud, 'Construction in Analysis', 1937, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: Moses and Monotheism, An Outline of Psycho-Analysis and Other Works*, translated by James Strachey, Vol. 23 (1937-1939), London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1964, pp. 259-260.

¹¹⁰ Sigmund Freud, 'The Unconscious', 1915, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, Vol. 14 (1914-1916), London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1957, pp. 159-204.

levels, which is a kind of waiting room of memories and feelings that are stored at this level so that they can easily be recalled to the conscious. This is Freud's topographical model of the human mind – unconscious, preconscious, and conscious. Freud thinks that people repeat the repressed things without knowing why they do so as the unconscious dominates what is repressed. He thus endeavoured to diagnose the origin (the fundamental cause) of the unintentional yet abnormal thoughts and behaviours of the patients, emanating from the unconscious. In short, every memory or experience from the past exists somewhere deep down well under the surface and human behavioural motivations, feelings, and decisions are rooted and provoked in Freud's theory of memory.

The works of Sisyphean archival art, sometimes, seemingly follow the Freudian mechanism of repetition on the surface: the tracking down of the repressed marks of origins is repeated but their artistic radar is not set to chase the original location of the repressive past. Rather, they tend to map out paths or trajectories constantly drawn, created, or destructed by such repressive energy regardless of where it starts. In a similar sense that Derrida critiques the Freudian premise of the archive, Sisyphean artists who engage with the past experience preserved in the archive fundamentally doubt what the nature of archive is, who should have access to it, how a certain fragment of repressed memory from the archive emerges and transforms, and what the pathological rhythms unveiled from archiving and archival research reveal and perform. Let us recall the artists who have been examined so far in the previous sections. Song Dong alters his mother's paranoiac collecting habit into a work of art, which does not merely repeat recalling her loss of family from the past anymore but becomes a living collection, a creation that is renewed by new contexts and memories. Similarly, Ilya Kabakov and Christian Boltanski suggest that there was something repressed in their orderly hoarding works, respectively, a constrained life and spirit as an unofficial artist under the oppressive Soviet society and the Holocaust Effect as a haunting image. However, their real interest may have been in unfolding the pathological process of archive fever itself. This reflects two important aspects: the traumatic memory and experience are continually thrown up from the archival act and system and, nevertheless, as Derrida would argue, the true nature of the cause

of that trauma as origin always slips away to pin down. Even though their archival impulse starts from the repressed content, their anarchival performativity of repetition does not remain back to ruminate on the traumatic times that have passed but actively decentres the physical and conceptual condition of the existing archive and generates the imagined times to come. Furthermore, in the cases of Andrea Fraser and Frederico Câmara, their penetration into cultural institutions break up the institutional cycle and routine of archival bureaucracy that reinforces the patriarchal authority of the archive as the archaic place by introducing the unexpected intervention and contingency.

In short, these Sisyphean archival practices resist the negative schema of Freud that regressively dig up the mnemonic origins of the past preserved deep down under the surface. Sisyphean artists are well aware that there are no such things in the archive. Instead, they prefer to disclose any false, distorted, or multiplied origins of any memory within the established archives. Such variation of the ruptured, slipped origins emerged from the archive can function as an artistic playground to create something further. The minor narratives written by highly personal and persistent endeavour of artists would act as an alternative platform to interpret the archive against the dominant readings of the archive. The next section will explore how major narratives based on the archival formulation in a national and imperialistic scale distort or disguise the reality of the world and will introduce more artists who detect such rupture, suggesting other possible, creative narratives or visions that have been ignored so far.

Mythical Archives

The modern concept of archives was actively formulated by the need for the European state archives in the nineteenth century. The modern archival discourse had developed alongside the historiography of modern Europe during a period of political and social turmoil between monarchy and civil liberty and between colonial empires and the colonised nations. A coherent national history built on official state archives ambitiously required data, and official files in the

archives became “a repository of forms of authoritarian and administrative acts”.¹¹¹ Historians began to have strong beliefs in the neutrality of historical narratives based on credulity towards a set of archives conveying factual, objective historical knowledge. Besides, the imperial desire to control the colonial others fuelled the impulse to achieve the comprehensive accumulation and organisation of knowledge. The systematic archiving had been built historically and strategically at a national level, and consequently, the coherent, standardised, and thorough sense of record keeping had been pursued throughout the century. This is the way in which dominating narratives and powers of knowledge and data have been constructed. Accordingly, the siting of archives became a departure point for hierarchical control, political power redistribution, national identity, and history.

In particular, Britain’s imperial and commonwealth history throughout the nineteenth century is a prime example. The British Empire was articulated through an archival project at a national level, in order to form a symbolic unity as an extended nation within an empire. Thomas Richards argues that the archival impulse of Victorian England was feverishly driven by knowledge accumulation and intelligence gathering from the grounds of colonisation. He locates the imperial archive as a method to gain of control over comprehensive knowledge and information:

Victorian England charged a variety of state facilities with the special task of maintaining the possibility of comprehensive knowledge. This operational field of projected total knowledge was the archive. The archive was not a building, nor even a collection of texts, but the collectively imagined junction of all that was known or knowable, a fantastic representation of an epistemological master pattern, a virtual focal point for the heterogeneous local knowledge of metropolis and empire.¹¹²

With the establishment of knowledge-producing institutions of the empire such as the British Museum, the Royal Geographical Society, the Royal Society, and the Royal Asiatic Society, information about the growing number of countries on the British map was surveyed, collected,

¹¹¹ Cornelia Vismann, *Files: Law and Media Technology*, translated by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008, pp. xii–xiii.

¹¹² Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire*, London: Verso, 1993, p. 116.

and classified. They took censuses, made lists, and produced statistics.¹¹³ Richards emphasises, “it was much easier to unify an archive composed of texts than to unify an empire composed of territory”.¹¹⁴ The process of creating this imperial archive consequently took “the form not of a specific institution but of an ideological construction for projecting the epistemological extension of Britain into and beyond its empire”.¹¹⁵

However, Richards critically points out the “fantasies” of this imperial archive. To fill the gaps in their knowledge and to make representative national narratives, the archival project of unification and synchronisation that Victorian official administrators proceeded to create was likely to be “the imagined form of a utopian state”.¹¹⁶ Some of the colonised countries, especially in Africa, had relatively little contact with Britain, as compared to India and Australia, and were somewhat isolated from its sphere of influence: the sense of “belonging to the British Empire was very often a fictive affiliation”.¹¹⁷ Their symbolic unity, geared by imperial archives, was actually lacking in practice and was often constructed through the distorting lens of the nation state. In this sense, Craig Robertson argues that state archives inevitably and explicitly historicise national narratives and characters, prioritising and privileging specific stories and peoples.¹¹⁸ In a similar way, the British Empire, by the late nineteenth century, had developed a new symbiosis of intelligence and power as a means by which the collected data was bureaucratically managed and controlled. The resultant state archives were fictively reconstructed, partly exaggerated, and deliberately imperialised.

It is apparent that there was a historical and political alliance between the writing of history and the archive. It can be said that the archive was at the centre of nineteenth century historiography and state bureaucracy. The idea of the unified and regulated national (or imperial) history came from the ideal that the archive could represent or guarantee objectified, universalised knowledge or narratives. Through this process, a certain unified, generalised, and

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 3 and p. 15.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹¹⁸ Craig Robertson, ‘Mechanisms of Exclusions’, in Antoinette Burton (ed.), *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions and the Writing of Histories*, Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2005, p. 71.

integrated story fostered from top to bottom is likely to become an orthodox belief, method, or system. However, this modern project of collecting thorough information, constructing the integrated voices of the archive and overseeing colonial archives is, in fact, utopian and mythical. There is an inevitable sense of distortion, imagination, and repression. With regard to this, Sven Spieker critiques modern historians' attempt to historicise the archive by foregrounding its origins and their beliefs in the objectification of any historical process, which are the fundamental fantasies that the nineteenth century historians sought.¹¹⁹ This utopian dream of the nineteenth century's historical paradigm is, of course, no longer valid. It has been critiqued and deconstructed by different historiographical models and postcolonial theories in the twentieth century.¹²⁰ More specifically, I have already discussed the post-structural critiques of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, challenging totalitarianism and convincingly showing that the historical archive does not give direct access to history.

Nevertheless, the archival language and desire of the nineteenth century's paradigm still affect the way in which its history is told and represented. Here, we can recall Foucault's figurative use of the archive as "the law of what can be said". The imperial, colonial representation of the past is inscribed in those archives, which continue to exist even in the current postcolonial times.¹²¹ The archival residues from the colonial past are still haunting and iterated in the reality of the postcolonial territories. According to Ernst van Alphen, "the temporary, elusive existence of colonial empires has been fixed in card catalogues and display cases".¹²² The mythical archives written and transmitted from a Western-centred view are likely to be internalised in the memories, history, and images of the colonised subject. Then, critical questions arise: What if historical records from those imperialistic archives are the only way to have access to a certain event of the past? How can the narratives and memories excluded from

¹¹⁹ Spieker, op. cit., pp. 23-24.

¹²⁰ Turning away from the event-oriented history, new forms of social science-oriented history that emphasised social structures and processes of social change and economic factors emerged in Continental Europe, Britain, and the United States. From the Hegelian theory of historical progress and the Marxist concept of historical materialism to the structuralism of the French Annales School, a varied range of methodological and ideological approaches to historiography were developed. See Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge*, Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2005, pp. 4-5.

¹²¹ Alphen, op. cit., 2014, p. 44.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 45.

the hegemonic writing of history be reconstructed or revisited at the present time? The work of Korean artist, Ayoung Kim (b. 1979), shows one possible answer. Kim obsessively revisits fragmented narratives based on dense archival research and de-mystifies the objectivity, integrity, and supremacy of imperial archives as a means of using their own mystified records to be misread. This approach would show how collectively fostered memory is personalised, given access to, and interpreted by an individual artist and also suggests how these kinds of small stories can be alternatives to dominating narratives.

PH Express (2011) (Fig. 2.2.2), a two-channel video work, is a re-enactment drama, which deals with a specific historical incident concerning the British occupation of Port Hamilton located on the southern Korean coast. Between 1885 and 1887, the British Royal Navy illegally built a military base on this small group of isolated islands with the purpose of establishing a containment policy towards Russia. It was the end of an era of imperial expansion in the nineteenth century, when the powerful British dominance over the world, based on the pioneering steamship, started to be shaken by other European naval powers. In particular, the British Empire had confrontations with Russia who pursued an expansionist plot towards the southern part of the Pacific Ocean, barricaded by India, Britain's most important colony.¹²³ Such tensions between the two countries had more sharply built up after the Panjdeh battle in Afghanistan where Britain was defeated by Russia. This is why the British government actively preempted the military strategic point in East Asia by occupying Port Hamilton. Once this incident had occurred, the political and diplomatic tensions among other world powers, including China, Japan, Germany, and France were increasingly raised to prepare for a potential outbreak of an Anglo-Russian war.¹²⁴ However, the more important thing here is the international position and roles of Korea in this map of power relations, which reveals the last dynasty of Korea, i.e. Joseon's incapability or torpor to handle the situation as a sovereign nation. Unfortunately, the actual stage of the incident is Korea but the subject of rights is

¹²³ Ayoung Kim, 'PH Express: Two-Channel Video (2011)', 2011, [Online] Available at: <http://ayoungkim.com/wp/works/ph-express-two-channel-video>, Last accessed 4 May 2016.

¹²⁴ Kyunghwa Koo, 'PH Express and Geomundo Island Incident or Much Ado about Nothing', in *Artspectrum 2012*, exhibition catalogue, Seoul: Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, 2012, p. 19, (pp. 14-31). For the historical background of the incident, Koo refers to Yong-Ku Kim, *Geomun Island and Vladivostok: The Crippled Internationalization of the Korean Peninsula in the 19th Century*, Sogang University Press, 2009.

alienated from this fierce power game. In fact, the Port Hamilton incident has a historical significance for the modern world of Korea because it is a crucial indicator foretelling the dark night of the Japanese colonial period and Korean War to follow.¹²⁵ Nonetheless, this noteworthy event is a relatively unknown part of history for both Korea and the UK.

Paying attention to accessibility of buried historical origins, Kim reconstructs the event as a short film developed from her own script writing. She assembles a vast range of archival materials ranging from confidential diplomatic and military documents and news articles published in Europe to official telegrams exchanged between the British Foreign Office officials, the British Navy in Port Hamilton, and British diplomats in East Asia during that time.¹²⁶ In the course of her research, Kim found out that most of the primary sources concerning the incident came from foreign historical records written and published from a Western point of view. Another obvious piece of evidence that Korea was excluded from the scene of power at the time, is the English name for the harbour itself. Although the Korean name for the islands, “Geomundo” exists, it appeared as Port Hamilton in the Western records, named after the secretary of the Admiralty, Captain W. A. B. Hamilton. For the title of the work, *PH* stands for the abbreviation of Port Hamilton and *Express* has a dual meaning: sailings of European steamers to eastern countries and delivery of mails and telegrams between associated parties in the imperial era.¹²⁷ Kim interweaves satirical stories through the collage of collective images and documentations of the West pertaining to this one-sided yet significant slice of history.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ayoung Kim, ‘PH Express: Project Description (2011–2012)’, 2012, [Online] Available at: <http://ayoungkim.com/wp/works/ph-express-project-20112012>, Last accessed 5 May 2016.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

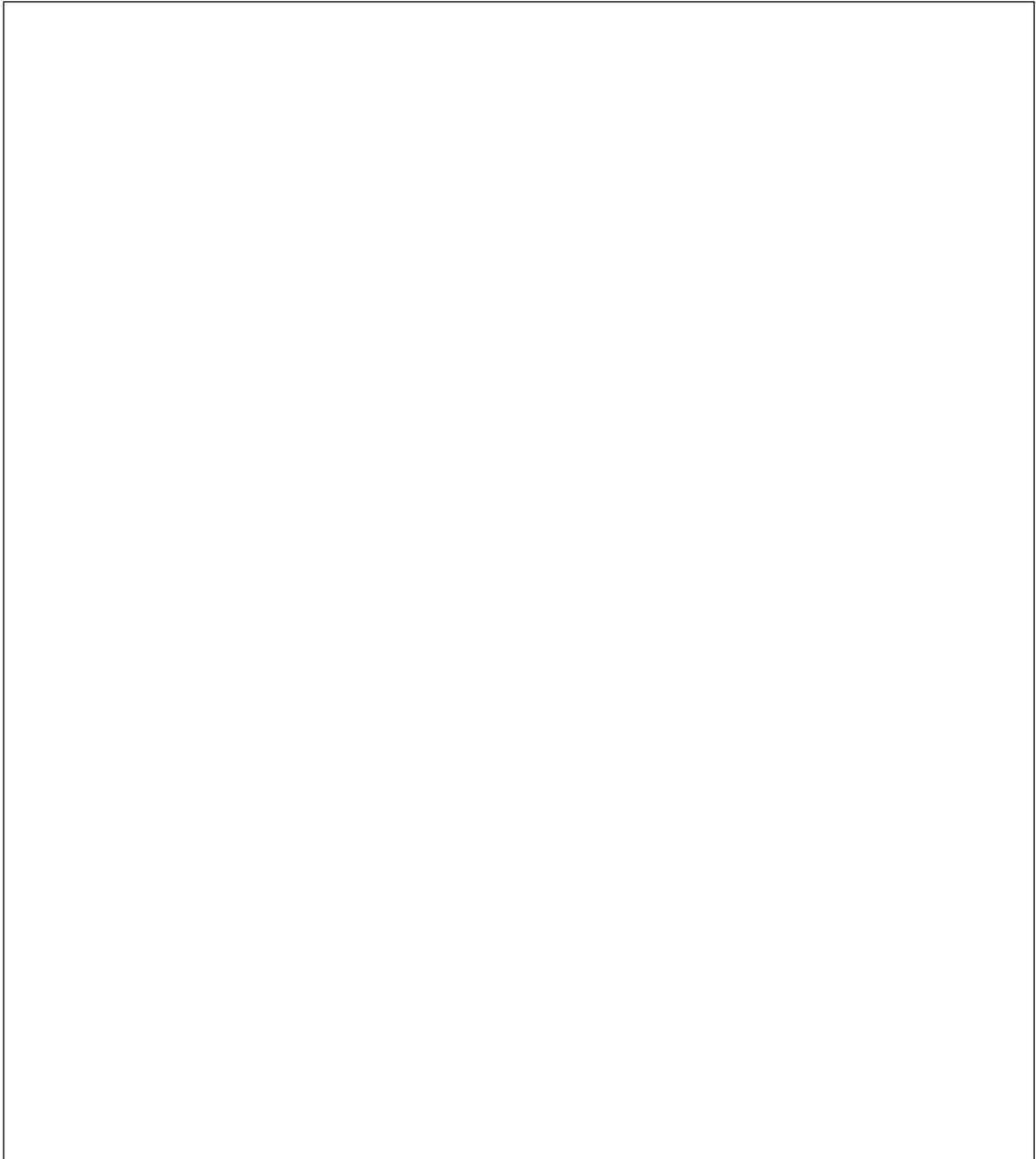


Figure 2.2.2. Ayoung Kim, *PH Express*, 2011, Still Images from Two Channel Video 32 min

In the film, there are only professional Western actors performing and none of the Korean people in Geomundo and none from the Joseon dynasty. Against the background of the current Geomundo landscape, the Admiral of the British Royal Navy in the past addresses local circumstances in Port Hamilton and the legitimacy of its occupation, while two naval sailors have a casual conversation about their trivial daily routine and gossip from the island. A group of British noblemen sit around a tea table, reading the news articles on the latest affairs of the

Port Hamilton incident. A German correspondent at that time reports the news about political and diplomatic responses of other European countries to a potential armed clash between the UK and Russia. A serious looking narrator quotes diplomatic messages of telegrams and correspondences sitting in a dark room. All the scenes show a satirical tone to a comic farce. Most of the characters' lines and quotes are from actual official records and texts from the mass media of various countries. The collage of documental information reflecting the different stances or interests of each country can be compared to an iterative sewing together of fragmented, heterogeneous patches from the forgotten, scattered past. Nevertheless, this elaborative process of quilting plays to stress on the manifold dimensions of gaps unveiled in the flow of the plot.

First, there was a considerable detachment in actuality between the Royal Navy marines living on the island and the increasing military tension in mainland Europe. *PH Express* portrays the boring life of the navy officials staying in Port Hamilton and the accidental deaths of marine soldiers that intermittently happened there. By juxtaposing this contradictory atmosphere between two places, the seriousness of the hegemonic battle and the geopolitical significance that the British Empire fussily occupies appear ludicrous and absurd. In spite of such a seemingly acute situation in Europe caused by imperial fever, Britain ended up withdrawing the navy from the port only after the two years of occupation, and no actual collision occurred.¹²⁸ This explicitly shows the British misjudgement on the political advantage of the occupation of Port Hamilton. They had to cope with intensifying diplomatic pressure at a global level and spend an enormous amount of military expenses to maintain the port base. For instance, one of the lines from the film demonstrates this differential temperature between the truth of the incident and the exaggerated reportage of its urgency circulated via mass media: “This report was repeated around the world in America, Australia, China, Japan and the Cape, until finally returning back to London only for the newspapers to incorrectly re-publish it”.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ This line is extracted from Ayoung Kim's *PH Express: Two-Channel Video*, 2011, two-channel video, approx. 31 min.

Second, the way of filming and editing of the work reinforces this gap between the truth of the event and its records. The actors perform the scenes of the Port Hamilton incident from the past but the background images show the present landscapes. These separate background scenes are made by the “chroma key”, that is a post-production technology for compositing different images in one frame. Kim’s *mis-en-scene* to layer different time zones leads to the idea that there is always a temporal and spatial gap in reading the past at the present time, i.e. we inevitably only have partial access to history. However, simultaneously, the emphasis on this gap also denotes the fact that the geopolitical issues and imperial remnants of the nineteenth century still exercise political, historical leverage in the present world of Korea. Struggling among the major world powers and accordingly passing through a tunnel of the Japanese colonial period, Korea has involuntarily opened the door to Western countries and precipitously modernised. The meaning of modernisation is equivalent to Westernisation in this case. In relation to this, Kim often cites Peter Osborne’s phrase, “non-contemporaneity of geographically diverse but chronologically simultaneous times”,¹³⁰ which informs many of her other works. This highlights the idea that the condition and pace of modern temporality is differentiated in every country. The process of Korean modernisation causes a cultural dissonance between tradition and new civilisation, and its subsequent side effects are still deeply permeating the contemporary circumstances of Korea.

Last but not least, some Western records of the incident produced wrong facts and even misinformed European people by presenting a distorted fantasy about this unknown island in the East. For example, Geomundo was mistaken as Jeju Island, the largest island off the further southern coast of Korea in some documents, and Joseon was sometimes described as an exotic place having mixed cultures of China and Japan in the Western mass media.¹³¹ Such misunderstandings and misrepresentations are derived from ignorance about Joseon at that time and from the imperialised eyes viewing a weak country. It typically reflects an orientalist illusion of the West to define some countries as underdeveloped.

¹³⁰ Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde*, London: Verso, 1995, p. 16.

¹³¹ Koo, op. cit., see footnote 4, p. 20.

Thus, these three series of discrepancies that Kim planted in her drama highlight inconsistent narratives of colonising and colonised histories. Presenting the blurred line between fact and fiction here, the distorted origin of the true historical event is dramatically disclosed and delivered. Kim's re-enactment of the incident on the basis of the already somewhat fictionalised, mystified historical records, constructed from an imperialist point of view, is meant to function as a fictive literature and to carry a great effect of absurdity from the very beginning. Her theatrical projection made up of retrospective fragments from here and there and from facts to false reports opens a repetitive entry to "history in the confusions of its origins".¹³² This attempt questions whether or not historical knowledge and writing from the mythical archives are valid and stable as a passage to what is called history. Ultimately, Kim does not reconstruct the original event through the film, but iteratively juggles with the irony that history can only be accessed by acknowledging its inaccessibility of origins.

Creating such a pseudo-history or a pseudo-archive can be a counter archive to radically react to biased, controlled, and collectively misrepresented archives, which rather amplify and articulate its ironical and irrational effects. Towards the twentieth and twenty-first century, as the political reality in different social and ethnic communities becomes multidimensionally embedded within complicated international networks, it is no longer possible to present a stable and coherent sense of national memory or historical writing from one decisive perspective. Therefore, the complexity of the contemporary dynamics of memory politics should be understood or read as multidimensional relationships. Likewise, official narratives or mediated information in the dominant media concerning a certain global event should be questioned as to whom the subject speaking is to and what social, political, and economic contexts are behind this narrative and what is missing from it. Perhaps, the most influential tool of formulating the mythical archive in the contemporary era is the mass media, which can more easily manipulate the essence of events through virtual images and plausible

¹³² Jakob Racek, 'Peripheral View: The Work of Ayoung Kim', translated by Lucinda Rennison, *BE Magazine*, Vol. 19, Winter, Berlin: Künstlerhaus Bethanien, 2012, p. 42.

stories than the imperial archiving project. Repeating the showing or making shocking news contributes to media-related archival production and presentation, generating mythical stories.

The alternative way to perceive this multifaceted problem of historical and mnemonic experience through mythical archives is best exemplified by Lebanese artist Walid Raad's artistic and fictional archives. Raad explores "the limits and possibilities of writing, documenting, and remembering history"¹³³ by activating imaginary narratives through his project, The Atlas Group Archive. While Kim dredged up a nearly forgotten event of history through archival research and its reconstruction, Raad invented a new archival framework to explore the exhausted memories of war, in the light of the long-lasting Lebanese civil war. Especially, hysterical and eccentric rhythms of repetition in his archival projects and storytelling keep rupturing the media's misrepresentation and fetishisation of factuality and actuality.

In preference to the conventional appearance of archival displays and the mediums of film and photography, The Atlas Group – a quasi-fictional collective, founded by Walid Raad (b. 1967) – has undertaken archival research on the Lebanese civil wars between 1975 and 1991 as well as kept a record of the contemporary life and the history of Lebanon.¹³⁴ The Atlas Group's archival collections are in the format of montage of peripheral facts and narratives about this traumatic history. The outbreak of the Lebanese civil wars is caused by complicated geopolitical, religious, and ethnic encounters, in which the French mandate of colonial powers is exerted and varied political parties and militias of Lebanon and other Arab and Western countries are confronted.¹³⁵ Aiming at documenting and studying the given issues, the Atlas Group Archive collected oral and visual records and found objects from anonymous individuals and organisations and produced related texts for 16 years. Raad addresses the fact that the Atlas Group Archive is located in Beirut and New York, of which collections are organised in three types of categories: [Type A] for files attributed to imaginary (authored) individuals or

¹³³ Eva Respini, 'Slippery Delays and Optical Musteries: The Work of Walid Raad', in *Walid Raad*, exhibition catalogue, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2015, p. 32.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹³⁵ Alan Gilbert, 'Walid Ra'ad', interview, *Bomb Magazine*, 81, Fall 2002, [Online] Available at: <http://bombmagazine.org/article/2504/walid-ra-ad>, Last accessed 8 May 2016.

organisations, [Type FD] for files attributed to anonymous individuals or organisation, and [Type AGP] for files produced by the The Atlas Group itself.¹³⁶

Resembling official institutional archives, the Atlas Group works with different donors, historians, and witnesses for its collections and activities and collaborates with the associated organisations. However, these participants are all fabricated characters invented by Raad, and he is the sole person playing the roles of researcher, archivist, and curator in every archival practice and project undertaken by the Atlas Group. Nonetheless, it is unfair to describe all the documents in the archive as fake, since they are basically collected by Raad from original sources, such as images and texts of the mass media and his own photographs. Once these factual records are gathered, they are transformed into an imaginary realm through Raad's storytelling and post-production processing.¹³⁷ While the collected materials are edited in size and form, digitally scanned, and reproduced, the documental condition of fact and fiction appears to be blurred at the end. Raad considers them to be "hysterical documents" because "they are not based on any one person's actual memories but on 'fantasies erected from the material of collective memories'".¹³⁸

In particular, these "hysterical documents" collectively look like an almost fetishised montage in which a serial repetition of similar events or patterns is presented as if the mass media continue to cover a similar kind of news every day. For instance, the Atlas Group is obsessively involved in investigating 3,641 car bombs detonated during the civil wars and archiving their traces. The files of *My Neck is Thinner than a Hair: Engines* (1996–2001) (Fig. 2.2.3) assemble 100 photographs of car engines that Raad collected from the An-Nahar Research Centre and the Arab Documentation Centre in Beirut.¹³⁹ During the period of wars, the newspapers were often covered with photographic images of car engines, as the engine is the only remaining part of the car after explosion and photojournalists competitively created

¹³⁶ See the Atlas Group Archive official website, [Online] Available at: <http://www.theatlasgroup.org/data/aboutW.html>, Last accessed 8 May 2016.

¹³⁷ Respini, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

¹³⁸ Gilbert, op. cit.

¹³⁹ Respini, op. cit., p. 74.

exclusive news of it.¹⁴⁰ Car bombings frequently happened in the wartime period, so that engines flowing from the explosion site were discovered all around the city of Beirut.¹⁴¹



Figure 2.2.3. Walid Raad, *My Neck is Thinner than a Hair: Engines*, 1996-2001

For the collection of *My Neck...*, press photos of this iterative motif are framed as prints with descriptive information including the date and place of the detonation, the original source of the photos, and accompanying commentaries. Similarly, another project, *Notebook 38: Already Been in a Lake of Fire* (1999–2002) (Fig. 2.2.4) contains 145 cut-out photographs of cars of different colours and shapes that had already exploded during the wars. On the paper sheets, the photographic cut-outs of cars used in bomb attacks are diversely positioned, being

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Evi Baniotopoulou, 'Atlas Group, Walid Raad: My Neck is Thinner than a Hair: Engines 200 – 3', *Tate Artwork Summary*, Aug, 2010, [Online] Available at: <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/atlas-group-raad-my-neck-is-thinner-than-a-hair-engines-t11912/text-summary>, Last accessed 10 May 2016.

vertical, horizontal, upside down, or doubly layered. Together with car images, handwritten memos in Arabic tell the details of the explosion.

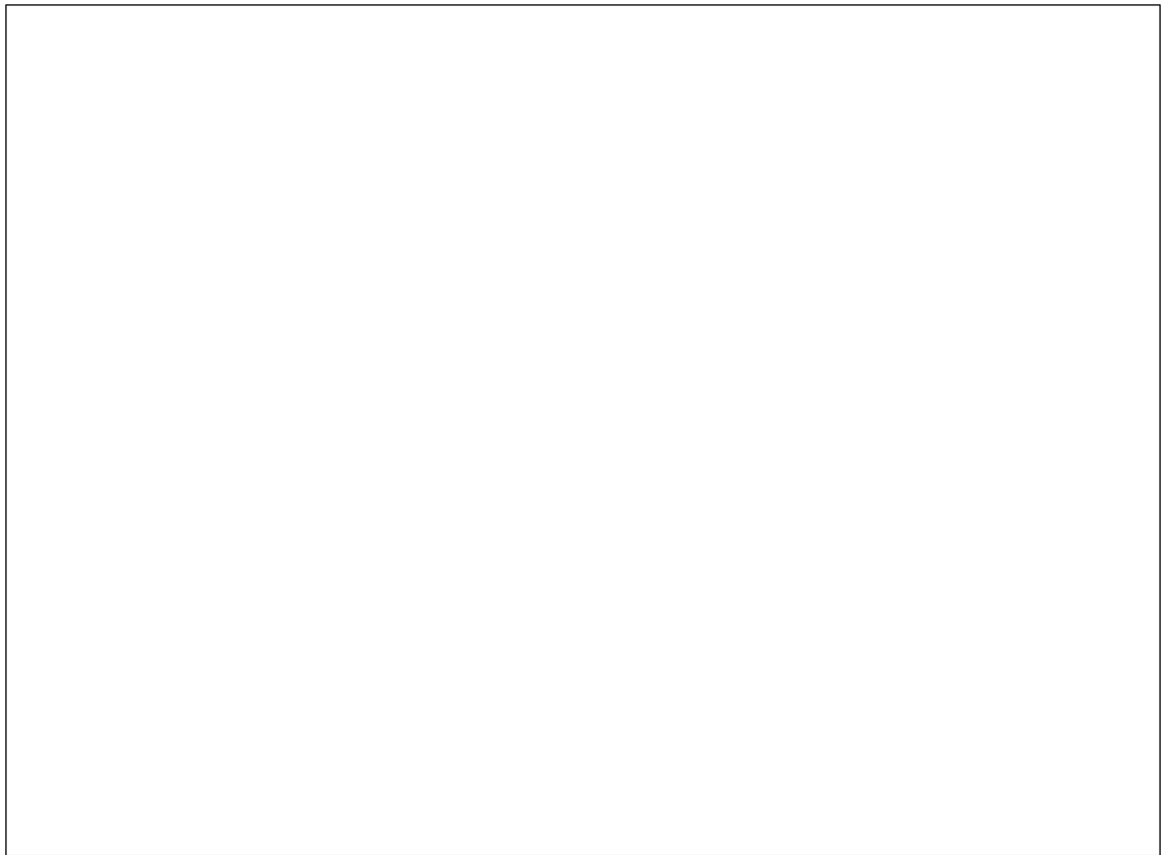


Figure 2.2.4. Walid Raad, *Notebook 38: Already Been in a Lake of Fire*, 1999-2002

However, the actual origins or references of the cars in both projects become vague in this seemingly endless process of archival montage. Perhaps, detecting the reliability and individuality of each archived item would not be the issue here. More importantly, the assembled car bombs in the files imply that such tragic and violent events during wartimes would continue over and over again as if in an endless loop.¹⁴² This also implies a typical pattern of the mass media coverage endlessly reporting such tragic world events in a loop. Solveig Gade critically claims that such archival practices of the Atlas Group can be regarded

¹⁴² Solveig Gade, 'Performing Histories: Archiving Practices of Rimini Protokoll and The Atlas Group', in Gundhild Borggreen and Rune Gade (eds.), *Performing Archives/Archives of Performance*, Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2013, p. 397.

as “repetitions without an original”.¹⁴³ Raad’s obsessive concern with tragic history and its archival reconstruction in the form of seriality and repetition neither seeks to track down the origins of the brutal attacks nor determines cause and effect, past and present, and fact and fakes of the war experience in a unified, linear narrative. What the Atlas Group is more concerned with is the documental procedure of repetition and its performative way of research and presentation itself. This precisely reflects Hal Foster’s critical account of archival art: “concerned less with absolute origins than obscure traces (perhaps ‘anarchival impulse’ is the more appropriate phrase), these artists are often drawn to unfulfilled beginnings or incomplete projects [...]”.¹⁴⁴ This repetition of similarity emphasises an abstract quality of the whole war more than a specific scene of horrors.¹⁴⁵ Therefore, the repetitive rhythms of archival/anarchival force in the Atlas Group Archive can be interpreted as either a traumatic symptom of the war itself or an alternative trajectory of deciphering historical traces and narratives in the present. However, this traumatic symptom of repetition that Raad embodies here does not move backward to be anchored in specificity even if it describes the very details of a specific tragedy during the wars. Rather, the expandability of endless records deters archival memories from rigidly determining any decisive and fixed conclusion and further diagnoses the far-reaching impact of cruel wars and conflicts that would continue to the present and future times. Raad addresses the Atlas Group’s aim:

What our work demonstrates is that the detonation of a car bomb is not only an act of violence, but also produces a discourse that directly and indirectly affects individuals, families, and communities. We have found that the car bomb is both a cause and a consequence of the ongoing political, military, economic, and criminal conflicts that have defined most aspects of life in Lebanon for the past thirty years. The history of these car bomb explosions doubles as a history of how the wars were physically and psychologically

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Foster, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

¹⁴⁵ Raad explains the Lebanese Civil War as “an abstraction” when he manifests the impossibility to reconstruct this history of the war from his archival project. See Gilbert, *op. cit.*

experienced, and how those who lived through such events speak about and assimilate their experiences.¹⁴⁶

Suggesting this alternative approach, the fictive element as well as its repeatedness is essential to the Atlas Group Archive. *Notebook 38* was donated by the fictitious historian Dr. Fadi Fakhouri. Using institutional schemes or logics of archiving, Dr. Fakhouri produced seemingly objectified historical accounts with factual images and accompanying information. However, interpolating the fact that this historian is actually an imaginary figure, authority and authenticity as legitimate criteria of historical records are displaced.¹⁴⁷ This mimicry archive based on similarities and resemblances to past events eventually performed different stories. In other words, the continuous return of these archived images imaginatively and performatively creates its own account of plausible stories without origin. This can also be understood to mean that we always fail to fully grasp the historical event and memory with the remnants of documents. The mechanism of repetition and plausibility haunts us with questions about the writing of history itself and about “an *arkhe* from which the original should commence”.¹⁴⁸ Perhaps, the whole project of the Atlas Group suggests that fictionalised archives could be the only adequate reconstruction of the Lebanese war experience. The issue of transformative storytelling through fact and fiction will be more extensively discussed later in the last section, ‘2.3. Repetition as Creation’.

To summarise, both Kim and Raad create their own counter archives based on fictionalisation and the inaccessibility of history and memory. Their external rhythms of repetition as researching and layering fragmented materials are often turned into internally subversive energy to disturb the original condition of archival logic or the aimed idealisation and totalitarianism of its mythical construction. We have witnessed that the mimetic, institutive, and legislative features of these given archival arts simultaneously work towards the transgressive and anarchival. Undermining mythical, grand narratives of dominant subjects and

¹⁴⁶ Walid Raad, *Walid Raad: Scratching on Things I could Disavow: Some Essays from the Atlas Group Project*, exhibition catalogue, Hamburger Bahnhof, Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Kulturgest, Lisbon, 2007, p. 91.

¹⁴⁷ Nicolas Lambouris, ‘Fabricating: Facts and Fiction in the Work of the Atlas Group’, *Photographies*, Vol. 7, No. 2, Sep, 2014, pp. 165-169.

¹⁴⁸ Gade, op. cit., p. 397.

discourses, they instead tend to illuminate peripheral, exclusionary, and forgotten stories in order to actively destruct rigid systems and the authoritative principles of their playgrounds.

Photographic Archives

Another crucial factor to fuel the modern archive is the invention of photography. The emergence of photography and its proliferation of snapshots on a commercial scale accelerated the archival impulse to generate and accumulate in the private and public sectors.¹⁴⁹ The photographic image as an archival record brought a fundamental transformation to the archival medium with the development of modern science seeking rationalised classifications in the nineteenth century.¹⁵⁰ The concept of photography as documentary evidence is based on the belief that photography accurately captures the uniqueness of events in the past and preserves that moment for later viewing. Photographic images accordingly became the most common form of memory-aid in both prosaic and socio-political use. Especially, the idea that scientific truth can be demonstrated by evidential images imbued photographic archives with the regulative and bureaucratic task of social control and differentiation in the nineteenth century.¹⁵¹ Since then, photography has been the most common documental medium, supporting the major systems of the regulated archiving and intelligence. Such principles of photographic archives have been developed and critiqued within the context of art, as opening up the questions of the originality of reproducible images and their versatile expandability into other artistic dimensions. What I would like to highlight here is how this plurality of repetitive images transforms the ontological and epistemological essence of the work of art and how it affects the aesthetic of archival art, promoting the critical potential of an archival/anarchival force favouring accumulation, fragments, discontinuity, rupture, and otherness. I shall also explore how the legacy of photomontage in the early twentieth century is reflected in and differentiated from Sisyphean archival art, which seeks to be free from the repressive schema of

¹⁴⁹ Okwui Enwezor, *Archive Fever: Uses of the Documents in Contemporary Art*, exhibition catalogue, International Center of Photography, Steidl, 2008, p. 12.

¹⁵⁰ Alphen, op. cit., 2014, p. 22.

¹⁵¹ Enwezor, op. cit., p. 13.

desiring origin or the original. These discussions will show how the very way of photographic repetition deconstructs a memory process in mass media culture.

Above all, the new photographic technology of freezing the moment and infinite reproduction brought a considerable change in the ways of seeing and perceiving the world and in how memory is processed in the modern age. Walter Benjamin most famously makes a claim for the modernity of photography and contemplates its reproductive quality and impact on the work of art. He describes the shock of this technological modernity as follows:

Of the countless movements of switching, inserting, pressing and the like, the 'snapping' of the photographer has had the greatest consequences. A touch of the finger now sufficed to fix an event for an unlimited period of time. The camera gave the moment a posthumous shock, as it were.¹⁵²

The technological capacity of the camera, producing photographic and filmic images meticulously records what the naked eye cannot detect from its surroundings. Besides, through the technical manipulation of enlargement and slow motion, “hidden details” of familiar backgrounds or objects can be closely explored.¹⁵³ Owing to this indiscriminate capturing, Benjamin calls the gaze of the camera an “unconscious optics”, comparing it to unconscious impulses in psychoanalysis.¹⁵⁴ However, the uniqueness of time and space in photography, grasped through this optical unconscious, are jeopardised by the very technique of photographic reproduction. Benjamin’s famous term “aura” defines an effect of authentic and unique presence in the traditional work of art, which has disappeared in this process of mechanical reproduction. The aura is “the unique phenomenon of a distance”¹⁵⁵ between the work of art and the viewer. Art was traditionally dependent on this ritual or supernatural effect of aura. However, when the work of art is duplicated in a repeatable way, the experience of distance is destroyed and its uniqueness is lost. The original value and authority of the work are also subsequently depreciated. Instead, unique existence is replaced by a plurality of repetitive

¹⁵² Walter Benjamin, ‘On Some Motifs in Baudelaire’, 1939, in Hannah Arendt (ed.), *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, translated by Harry Zohn, New York: Schochen Books, 1968, p. 174.

¹⁵³ Walter Benjamin, ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, 1936, in Hannah Arendt (ed.), *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, translated by Harry Zohn, New York: Schochen Books, 1968, p. 236.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 221-222.

copies.¹⁵⁶ Thus, according to Benjamin, a magical sense of the “cult value” in the work of art no longer exists but “exhibition value” remains in this quantitative shift of photography.¹⁵⁷

Having both positive and negative insights into the loss of aura, Benjamin suggests that this modern transformation of photographic reproduction opened up “entirely new functions” for artistic creation.¹⁵⁸ Benjamin found a more extended role of film based on the montage technique and believed that the moving image was able to reinforce the early Dadaists’ effort to destruct the aura of their works by means of reproductive productions.¹⁵⁹ When Benjamin claimed his new theory of photography, it was the time right after the early Dadaist radical movement endeavoured to disconnect the work of art from tradition and to de-mystify its grandeur, authenticity, uniqueness, and originality. Photomontage was initiated as a means of reflecting on the shocking effects of modernity and political dissent. It is a variation of collage composed of cutting, re-arranging, pasting, and re-photographing images from mass reproductions. Artists such as Hannah Höch, John Heartfield, and Kurt Schwitters used photomontage as one of their main working methods and later the Surrealists exploited the experimental aspects of photomontage to realise ideas of free association and contingency in their practices. Parallel to this, Russian Constructivists such as El Lissitzky and Alexander Rodchenko also employed the language of photomontage as propaganda.

With the essential precondition of technical reproduction, artists utilising strategies of photomontage produced a range of works including photo albums, files, scrapbooks, and artist books for the manipulation of any existing form, order, and norm of the era. However, according to Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, the photomontage of the early Dadaist movement soon faced the exhaustion of its critical potential and political effect. Buchloh distinguishes the earlier aesthetics of photomontage of the historical avant-garde from the newly emergent archival and mnemonic order of photographic collections in the late twentieth century by stating, “Thus, as early as 1925, we were able to observe an initially hesitant, then more radical,

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 220-223.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 224-225.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 237-238.

change in the aesthetics of photomontage in which the epistemology of the shock effect was replaced by the epistemology of archival order".¹⁶⁰ The new archival shift in artists' photographic productions tended to be sequential and serial in form. Their interests rather critically started to embrace the sceptical views towards this advanced capacity of the reproductive medium. In order to explain this internal change, Buchloh compares Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas* (1927–1929) to Gerhard Richter's *Atlas* (1962–2013). (Fig. 2.2.5) Both *Atlases* engage with photography's archival order as a form of montage. Buchloh's analysis of this pair provides important clues for further discussion of Sisyphean archival art based on photographic reproductions that facilitate an archival/anarchival force of repetition without origins.

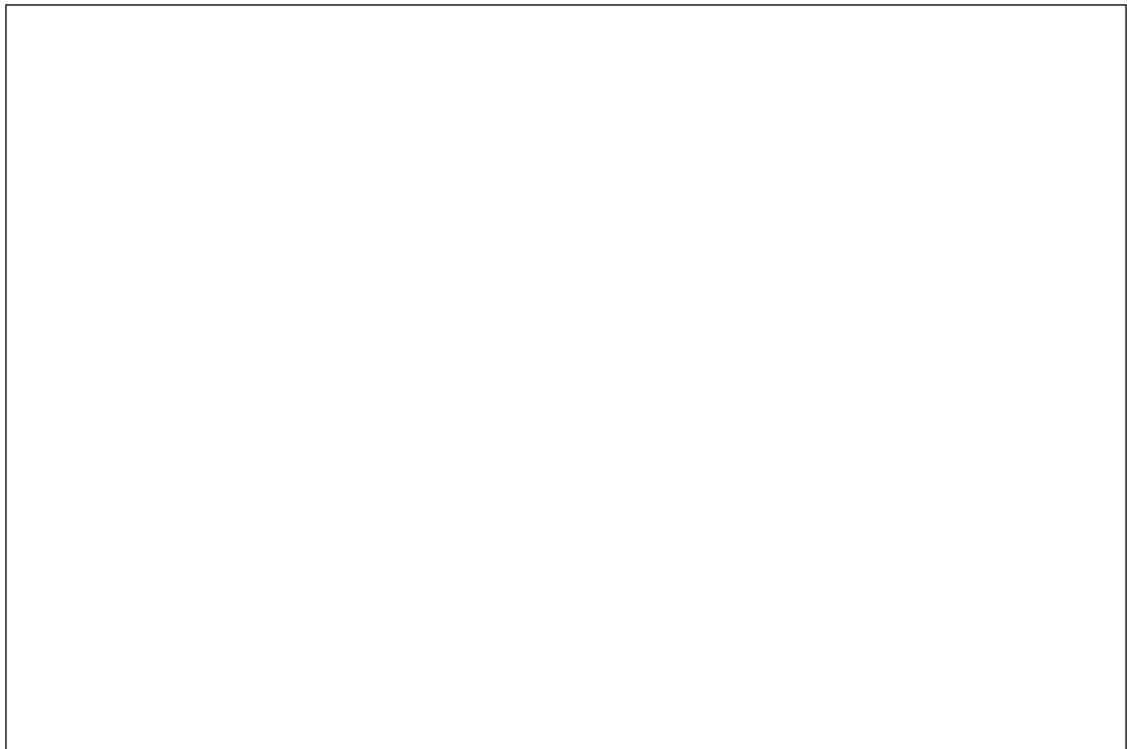


Figure 2.2.5. Gerhard Richter, *Atlas*, 1962-2013

¹⁶⁰ Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'Warburg's Paragons? The End of Collage and Photomontage in Postwar Europe', in Schaffner and Winzen (eds.), *op. cit.*, 1998, p. 54.

The *Atlas* project of Richter (b. 1932) is an ongoing photo collection, initiated in 1964. Composed of over 5000 pictures from snapshots, postcards, and newspaper cuttings to popular magazines, his series of photo panels is an open-ended encyclopaedic work to be added and added to. Richter sometimes uses these accumulative images as sources for his paintings but his *Atlas* stands on its own as a work of art. The grids of images contain various types of photo shoots from a panorama, an aerial view, to a close-up, loosely grouped in each panel.¹⁶¹ Richter started to collect these images after he moved to the West from East Germany in 1961.¹⁶² As the volume of collection grew, the initial character of it being particular and practical metamorphosed to reveal more dynamic and abstract rhythms among aggregated images. Buchloh sees that Warburg and Richter's photographic project collide with each other in terms of their different impact on the construction of historical memory. More specifically, Buchloh juxtaposes two famous yet conflicting views of photographic theory of that time in order to consider the opposite aesthetics of these two *Atlases*. The two poles of theory are Walter Benjamin's affirmative agenda of photography as modernity and Siegfried Kracauer's media pessimism.¹⁶³ Briefly stated, with the rise of photographic media culture, Benjamin situated technological reproduction as a modern mode of perception and shock experience and anticipated its revolutionary and emancipatory power, while Kracauer had the pessimistic viewpoint that mass cultural representations based on photographic reproduction would eventually destroy mnemonic processes.¹⁶⁴

For Buchloh, Warburg's *Atlas* still preserves an almost Benjaminian trust in the emancipatory and egalitarian function of photographic reproduction and dissemination, as the early paradigm of Dada photomontage did.¹⁶⁵ With a radical method of image montage from "high" and "low" culture, Warburg challenged the established study and discipline of art history, just as Dadaist photomontage had hoped to dismantle the auratic work of authenticity

¹⁶¹ Iwona Blazwick, 'Introduction', in Iwona Blazwick et al. (eds.), *Gerhard Richter Atlas: The Reader*, London: Whitechapel, 2003, p. 11

¹⁶² Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'Gerhard Richter's Atlas: The Anomic Archive', *October*, Vol. 88, Spring 1999, p. 134.

¹⁶³ Walter Benjamin's essay, 'Short History of Photography' was written in 1931 followed by the publication of Siegfried Kracauer's 'Photography' in 1927.

¹⁶⁴ Buchloh, op. cit., 1999, p. 105 and pp. 107-108.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

and authorship and the hierarchical class relations in the established art world. In amassing photographic reproductions, Warburg wished to construct “a model of historical memory and continuity of experience”, which was a resistant reaction to the ruthless destruction of cultural memory and inheritance committed by German Fascism at the time.¹⁶⁶ Warburg’s *Mnemosyne Atlas* attempted to exhibit Western European history from antiquity to the present by tracing multiple layers of cultural transmission embedded in the fragmented images. Warburg basically presupposed mnemonic continuity as historical origin, which could be discovered through or emerge through the pictorial montage of fragmented and heterogeneous elements. The premise of Warburg’s method is therefore based on recognising mnemonic origins preserved and transferred in images as continuity and also the belief in photographic functions that can enact these lasting memories.¹⁶⁷ However, Buchloh points out that such “confidence in photographic versatility and reliability”¹⁶⁸ is at the opposite end of Kracauer’s position. Kracauer argues that it is not possible for such mnemonic origins to be captured in photography. For him, the mnemonic process in the human psyche and photography run counter to each other:

Memory and photography retain information in completely different ways. The systems of ranking and retaining information operate by opposite principles. [...] Photography grasps what is given as a spatial (or temporal) continuum; memory images retain what is given only insofar as it has significance. Since what is significant is not reducible to either merely spatial or merely temporal terms, memory images are at odds with photographic representation.¹⁶⁹

Kracauer claims that photography functions as an index to mark the moment of its spatial configuration overlaid when produced. Once photography gets old, the original reference and its physical presence have been lost and emptied.¹⁷⁰ In Kracauer’s account, photography does not fully show the past but merely captures “the residuum that history has discharged”.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 123-124.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 122.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 131.

¹⁶⁹ Siegfried Kracauer, ‘Photography’, 1927, translated by Thomas Y. Levin, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 19, No. 3, Spring 1993, p. 425

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 429.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

Buchloh suggests that such a view on photography is sensed in Richter's *Atlas*. Richter's images are not supposed to represent a certain sense of the meaningfully signified and thus cannot be consumed as any historical, mythical monument.¹⁷² Instead, the appearance and structure of Richter's *Atlas* addresses the photographic medium as "a system of ideological domination in which collective anomie, amnesia and repression are socially inscribed".¹⁷³ Richter himself asserts that in his photographic collection there are neither perceived plans and programmes nor specific themes in an archaeological sense.¹⁷⁴ In accordance with different ways of sequencing, grouping, and curating, Richter's *Atlas* can generate a constantly changing discontinuity and heterogeneity of photographic repetitions. The dynamics between aggregation and dispersion of images in his *Atlas* is not anchored in any represented origins of history or memory for comprehensive readings but performs an anti-archival meaning of anomie, entropy, and disorder. This can be regarded as anarchival performativity sensed in the repetitive panorama of Richter's *Atlas*.

More importantly, Kracauer warns that the explosion of reproductive images combined with the mass media, such as illustrated newspapers and magazines, rather erases what the things really mean:

But the flood of photos sweeps away the dams of memory. The assault of this mass of images is so powerful, that it threatens to destroy the potential existing awareness of crucial traits. Artworks suffer this fate through their reproductions. The phrase "lie together, die together" applies to the multiply reproduced original; rather than coming into view through the reproductions, it tends to disappear in its multiplicity and to live on as art photography.¹⁷⁵

The photograph's spatial and temporal representation is provisional and fragmented, which induces a plural reading.¹⁷⁶ The more the photographic reproductions are seized the further their

¹⁷² Spieker, op. cit., p. 148.

¹⁷³ Buchloh, op. cit., 1999, p. 134.

¹⁷⁴ Lynne Cooke, 'Gerhard Richter', in Iwona Blazwick et al. (eds.), *Gerhard Richter Atlas: The Reader*, London: Whitechapel, 2003, pp. 118-119.

¹⁷⁵ Kracauer, op. cit., p. 432.

¹⁷⁶ In this regard, Kracauer makes the following claim: "The photographic archive assembles in effigy the last elements of a nature alienated from meaning. [...] The images of the stock of nature disintegrated into its elements are offered up to consciousness to deal with as it pleases. Their original order is lost; they no longer cling to the spatial context that linked them with an original out of which the memory-image was selected. However, if the

original order and meaning are erased and the greater the threat of forgetting what viewers seem to experience. For Kracauer, media culture and its mass representation can destroy the mnemonic process and historical thought. The ever-changing nature of photographic mass culture produces constant repetitions of signifiers without the significance of the signified. In this manner, the firm belief in photographic archives that factual and stable origins of any spatial and temporal memory capture has been dismantled, the credulity of the photographic image has been ruptured and, moreover, photographic reproducibility combined with mass media culture has intensified the memory crisis of oblivion rather than having contributed to more accurate remembrance.

Today's mass media have evolved in dependence on more advanced digital technologies – cameras, computers, and the Internet – than the media at the time of Benjamin and Kracauer. Consequently, mnemonic experience and historical reality mediated through such multiplied media seem to be more complicated to judge over “usable pasts and disposable data” and more vulnerable to oblivion.¹⁷⁷ Andreas Huyssen diagnoses the symptom of the memory crisis in the 1990s as “amnesia” or “anesthesia” and identifies one of causes as the impact of media culture.¹⁷⁸ If a certain series of shocking news, such as tragic wars and disasters, violent crimes, and catastrophic terrorism in the mass media is incessantly repeated, ironically, the event itself in essence is meaninglessly consumed and forgotten. People's mind and eyes become, so to speak, exhausted and insensitised against the spectacle of news coverage through which relevant memories or narratives readily fade and become discoloured. Regardless of whether or not those images convey the truth or factuality of the event, photography, as the most prevalent medium, plays a dominant role in providing fixed visual impressions and spreading associated stories of certain events that happened. The cliché-like repetition in this reporting process of both printed and aired media seems to be based on the premise of ephemerality, giving a shortcut to effective oblivion. News may be the most

remnants of nature are not oriented toward the memory-image, then the order they assume through the image is necessarily provisional”. See *ibid.*, pp. 435-436.

¹⁷⁷ Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003, p. 18.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

perishable goods that contemporary humans devour. I would like to address memory as it has developed with regard to the contemporary multimedia environment by exploring the photomontage works of Kim, namely *Ephemeral Ephemera* (2007–2009). This series of works characterises the historical features of photography as mass medium and photography as photomontage that we have explored so far. Kim particularly dramatises an archival/anarchival force in the media archive through repetition, questioning the evidential reliability and ephemerality of photographic images in the mass media.

Kim grasped the conflicting meanings of the term “ephemera” – “things of short-lived duration or of no lasting significance” yet which “subsequently become collectibles” because of their very temporary value or endurance.¹⁷⁹ Kim started creating the work by collecting daily newspapers on the tube and news articles from the Internet, documenting real events like crime scenes appearing and disappearing on a daily basis and making this material a part of her work. For Kim, this media representation was the only window to keep up with the current issues of the world when studying in London as a foreign student. She was well aware of the spectacle society where the copies of images without originals become more real and powerful than the actual reality in the postmodern world.¹⁸⁰ All titles of the series come from the actual headlines of the news, for example: “Accept North Korea into the nuclear club or bomb it now, 11 Oct, 2006” (2007), “Headless body found in Thames, 21 April, 2007” (2007) (Fig. 2.2.6), “British teacher found buried in bathtub of sand, 28 March, 2007” (2008), “CCTV captures death chase, 19 July, 2007” (2008), “Crops of dope to help my kids, 26 May, 2008” (2009).

Once the real event shown in the media is picked up, Kim visits the actual sites of the incidents to photograph them. She also photographs various landscapes from her surroundings in order to reconstruct the scenes of the selected news. These photographic surfaces are then digitally transformed, to become fragmented pieces from which she builds three-dimensional

¹⁷⁹ Ayoung Kim, ‘Project Statement: Ephemeral Ephemera (2007–2009)’, [Online] Available at: <http://ayoungkim.com/wp/works/ephemeral-ephemera-2>, Last accessed 25 April 2016.

¹⁸⁰ Lucy Soutter, ‘Returning to the Scene of the Crime’, 2008, [Online] Available at: <http://ayoungkim.com/wp/works/ephemeral-ephemera-2>, Last accessed 25 April 2016. This refers to theories of Guy Debord and Jean Baudrillard. See Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, Black & Red, U.S., 1983 and Jean Baudrillard, ‘Simulacra and Simulations’, in Mark Poster (ed.), *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988, pp. 166-184.

stage-sets of a photomontage. Kim then photographs these photographic models, producing her final images. The perspectives of the stage-sets she photographs are somewhat exaggerated and distorted and some subsidiary elements are added to amplify the “reality” of the restaged circumstances of the original events. The stage is made up of flat, fragile, and temporary cuts of paper so that it can only have a realistic effect from a certain camera angle.¹⁸¹ In this final outcome of the photomontage, the photographic components referring to temporal and spatial clues of the crime scene are gathered together as a set of fleeting and fragmented information soon to disappear is uncomfortably held onto the surface of the stage.

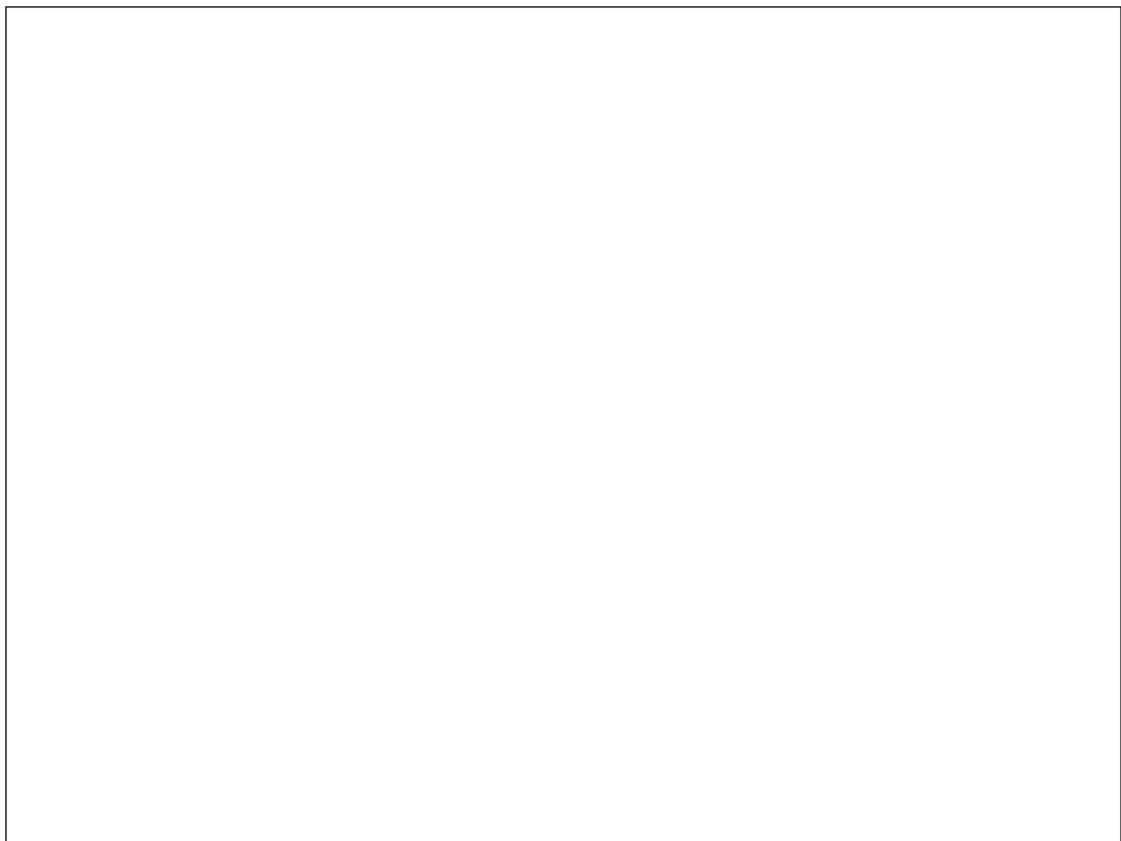


Figure 2.2.6. Ayoung Kim, *Headless Body Found in Thames, 21 April, 2007*, 2007

Even if Kim’s photographic stage-sets seem to be full of overlapping informational data, the data are inadequate for viewers to restore the real stories of the original incidents and

¹⁸¹ Kim, op. cit., 2007–2009.

events. Such a sense of inadequacy is further intensified through the reiterative barrier in the image production process. It is worth looking at the returning cycles of news reconstruction in Kim's photomontages for further critical readings. This is the outline of her method: 1) collecting a particular news article from a two-dimensional newspaper or computer screen, 2) taking a photo shoot of the three-dimensional crime scene in actuality, 3) altering these images into the photographic façades in two dimensions, 4) building a three-dimensional stage-set in the form of photomontage, and 5) making a final image of the stage in two dimensions again for the final time. As these iterative steps proceeded from two to three dimensions, the essence of the reconstructed event is gradually etiolated and disturbed. There are neither texts apart from their titles nor additional descriptions to explain the stories behind them but only cut and pasted images. The repetitive layers make the original contexts and meanings of the scenes distanced, which eventually get lost. As a result, the final image is occupied with heterogeneous and peculiar signs, which maximise visual absurdity and perceptual estrangement. Through this layering process, the delivered story in the photographic image becomes cut, pasted, dissipated, and ruptured in the end.

Then, why does Kim choose to make the ultimate production remain flat in two-dimensional photography after all these steps? The reason is that this would be precisely the way in which the news is conveyed via the photographic medium. Reading a newspaper is the easiest way to obtain the world news and current affairs without any direct sensation or physical experience. Above all, there is always a time difference between the reality and the news reporting. Sumi Kang points out that "discrepancy in time and gaps in meanings" are the key ideas to understand Kim's photomontages.¹⁸² In other words, the repetitive phases of transmission show the inevitable occurrence of discordance between the reality and media representation. Hence, as the layering process of reconstruction is reiterated, its final image drifts through temporal and syntactic ruptures that contain nothing in the centre. This resonates

¹⁸² Sumi Kang, 'A Stage of Ephemeral Images: The "Shortcut" of Ayoung Kim, The Photo Montage Works', in *The Wonderful Realities of Korean Contemporary Arts*, Seoul: Hyunsil Books, 2009, pp. 156-163.

with Kracauer's statement: "Photography assembles fragments around a nothing".¹⁸³ This also mirrors a crisis of provenance in photographic media archives, repetitively drifting apart from their informational value and authenticity and eventually being hollowed out of the origin as such. Dramatising the deconstructive effect, Kim removes the content as the signified and rearranges the emptied photographic façades as the signifiers. Access to the original moment of the event through Kim's image therefore fails from the outset. In short, Kim's *Ephemeral Ephemera* oscillates between fact and fiction, between representation and abstraction, and reportage and theatre through the anarchival performativity that Kim sets out. By blurring such poles, Kim does not advocate the photographic function as truthful mnemonic aid or evidence but shows a fateful collapse of the trust that we have in photographs.

Looking at the early aspiration of the photomontage, we see that advocating perceptual shock and its revolutionary power was replaced by the new archival order featured as a case of infinite precariousness of serial structuring in the late twentieth century.¹⁸⁴ Both are run by archival/anarchival drives (or destruction) in favour of temporal and formal discontinuity and rupture any rigid order or symbol of bureaucratic and commemorative culture. However, photographic archives, particularly in the late twentieth century, inclined towards the endless expandability and non-linear archival sequence of form and emphasise archival/anarchival rhythms of repetition from within. The case of Richter's *Atlas* seeks for limitlessness of repetitive signifiers, unfolded like a rhizomatic database without any origins. In the context of this limitlessness, it is meaningless to define what each item symbolises and where it comes from. The photographic aggregation as a whole in the *Atlas* indicates the increasing condition of entropy and anomie. Accordingly, the major function of photography in Richter's *Atlas* has been transformed from mnemonic aid to amnesia, from the effective carrier of a dominant ideology to the collective symptom of repression, and from the archival to the anarchival impulse. In the meantime, Kim's series of photomontage does not function as a visual shock or sensation but rather merges the filtered shock from the mass media in her own manipulated

¹⁸³ Kracauer, op. cit., p. 431.

¹⁸⁴ We have already witnessed these archival features of seriality and expandability in the works of On Kawara, Uriel Orlow, Dieter Roth, Christian Boltanski, and Ilya Kabakov in Chapter 2.1.

representation. She creates the factual yet fictive stage sets of photography in which layers and layers of temporal and spatial distance are iteratively generated. This working strategy implies an infinite loop of reproduction and reconstruction as a means by which the fragmented, incomplete representation of daily life, memory, and history permanently continues.

Technically, while Richter accumulates photographic images of personal and collective memory as chaos of expandability, Kim creates the contemporary image of mnemonic transmission via the mass media as disorder of layering. In any case, their anarchival performativity of repetition creates ruptures in photographic archives, disrupting the secure belief in evidential indexicality and particularity of photographic memory and demonstrating its association with the intensification of the phenomenon of memory crisis in the contemporary world.

Digital Archives: Mnemonic Mastery or Oblivion?

Let me begin with the video installation *AgX* (2014) (Fig. 2.2.7) by Grayson Cooke. It comprises two films that are looped sequentially. Each work reveals a chemical and physical decaying process of photographic negatives. The iterative scenes of time-lapse macro-photography decomposing induce a sense of nostalgia and spectral disappearance simultaneously. A set of negative photographs featured in films comes from the artist's personal archive that was preserved in his parents' attic for 20 years. The images of his family, friends, and memorable events in his youth are being gradually dissolved as a result of chemical reaction. The title *AgX* is the chemical name for silver halide, the light-sensitive compound that constitutes celluloid images.¹⁸⁵ It is an art-science project as part of a larger project called *image | after*, created in collaboration with scientist and artist Amanda Reichelt-Brushett. They applied a range of strong acids and oxidising agents, such as nitric acid, acetic acid, sulphuric acid, hydrogen peroxide, and silver nitrate to the negatives.¹⁸⁶ I observed three

¹⁸⁵ See Grayson Cooke's own description about *AgX* on his website, [Online] Available at <http://www.graysoncooke.com/works-and-projects/agx>, Last accessed 15 August 2015.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

interesting points in *AgX* in terms of archival fragility as a record-keeping media and technology.



Figure 2.2.7. Grayson Cooke, *AgX*, 2014/2015, Northern Rivers Community Gallery Ballina

First, it visually encapsulates the vulnerability and ephemerality of photography. The durable images created on the surface of the film are shrunk and emulsion is simultaneously peeled off to disappear, disclosing ruptures and failures of the photographic archive as a permanent mnemonic device aiding to fix and preserve moments as they are.¹⁸⁷ Looping images of shrinking and unrolling conveys a sense that the passage of time and exposure to chemical intervention ruin the stability of photographic records, so a risk of forgetting and oblivion is inherent in every analogue archive. In other words, this material degradation denotes that the “anarchival” is at the very centre of archival practice. Regarding this paradoxical feature of the

¹⁸⁷ Ethnographic Terminalia Curatorial Collective (Craig Campbell, Kate Hennessy, Fiona P. McDonald, Trudi Lynn Smith, Stephanie Takaragawa) and Thomas Ross Miller, ‘Ethnographic Terminalia – After the Bureau of Memories: Reflections at the Intersections of Archives, Art and Anthropology’, *Mnemoscape*, Issue no.2, March 2015, [Online] Available at: <http://www.mnemoscape.org/#!/ethnographic-terminalia---after-the-bure/c2n8>, Last accessed 22 August 2015.

archive, Cooke himself once mentioned that “the archive might record its own dissolution”.¹⁸⁸ Second, the chemical decaying process in the work arguably alludes not only to destroying the materiality of photography but also to deconstructing the credulity towards and authority of the photographic archive as documentary evidence that consists of long-lasting, reproducible, and unvarnished records. Cooke’s *AgX* destroys the chemical fixing of light or electromagnetic radiation onto substrate – photography by definition – so that it effectively acts out “an unfixing of photography and archives”.¹⁸⁹ With the ephemeral feeling of images, the status of photography as an authoritative archival medium and its aura slowly fade away. Last, the artist voluntarily destroys his own archive while looking back at his own personal memories and history. Cooke actively chose to dissolve the material and content of his own photographs from the past and visualised their immanent anarchival force through the artistic experiment and its consequent production. In Cooke’s *AgX*, I have found the vulnerability and obsolescence of the archival medium and technology, the anarchival force bleaching the taken-for-granted logic, power and system of the social archives, and finally the artist’s interest in the archive itself as a subject matter. Cooke ironically chose to use digital photography and film as a method of work to deconstruct the very vulnerabilities of their media.

In addition to Cooke’s practice, there has been a wide range of using or mixing of the photographic and digital sources to re-appreciate identity, history, memory, and loss of our time as an eyewitness or keeper of archival matter. Artists’ obsession with things being fleeting and the desire to capture the flickering moments of memory against loss are focused on developing new forms of dynamic yet fragmentary movements of appearing and disappearing, remembering and forgetting to map out both levels of archival meaning and technology. Regarding archival technology, Derrida affirms that “what is no longer archived in the same way is no longer lived in the same way. Archivable meaning is also and in advance codetermined by the structure that archives.”¹⁹⁰ The apparent ascendancy of digitisation today

¹⁸⁸ Grayson Cooke, *after | image – promo* clip, [Online] Available at: <https://vimeo.com/61944480>, Last accessed 25 August 2015.

¹⁸⁹ Ethnographic Terminalia Curatorial Collective and Thomas Ross Miller, op. cit.

¹⁹⁰ Derrida, op. cit., 1996, p. 18.

definitely reflects the ways in which we document the present time, retrieve personal and collective memory from the past, and perceive the future. The current digital age is indeed a time of acceleration. The speed and efficiency of data production and delivery have become an essential virtue of economic growth and geo-political power.¹⁹¹ We are being bombarded with digital images produced and preserved by the diversified digital media. The digital form of archiving in both domestic and institutional realms has been rapidly expanding. Needless to say, the virtual world of the Internet now offers a limitless space of archival storage and distribution. Accordingly, the traditional forms of writing and storage are in “a process of destabilisation, transition, or displacement”.¹⁹² As archiving is situated at this confluence of analogue and digitisation, dealing with the issue of digitisation has become the most controversial one. Digital data featured as immateriality tend to be easily stored and easily forgotten. The boundaries between remembering and forgetting seem to be more and more blurred under these digital conditions. Though digital mastery over memory is anticipated thanks to the limitless capacity of the virtual world, paradoxically, the sense of oblivion and obsolescence seems to be more intensified.

Berlin-based media artist Arnold Dreyblatt (b. 1953) has long been interested in the complex relationship between recollections of cultural memory and the archive. His media installations and performance works often visualise the reiteration of analogous and digital writing (or inscription), projected onto the space and interacting with the viewers (or users). Taking the name from Freud’s psychoanalytic analogy of the “Mystic Writing-Pad” in German, Dreyblatt’s *The Wunderblock* (2000) creates a digital version of the pad to question contemporary memory processes and technology.¹⁹³ The screen of Dreyblatt’s *Wunderblock* shows fragmented texts continuously fading in and out. Creating visual layers of appearing and disappearing texts, the complete sentences are not displayed, so their meanings cannot be recognised in their entirety. This digital pad basically simulates Freud’s model of the psychic

¹⁹¹ Orlow, op. cit., 2006a, p. 34.

¹⁹² Sas Mays, ‘Introduction: Unpacking the Library’, in Sas Mays (ed.), *Libraries, Literatures, and Archives*, Routledge, 2014, p. 3.

¹⁹³ Astrid Schmetterling, ‘Archival Obsessions: Arnold Dreyblatt’s Memory Work’, *Art Journal*, Winter, 2007, p. 72.

process. Freud compares the mental apparatus with “the Mystic Writing-Pad”, which is a writing tablet for children to write and erase notes.¹⁹⁴ It consists of a wax slab and a thin transparent sheet. This sheet can be divided into two layers: the upper layer is a celluloid film and the lower layer is a waxed paper. When the user presses to write something with a stylus upon the pad, its traces appear on the celluloid surface through the contact with the wax slab underneath the waxed paper. The written notes can easily disappear by simply lifting up the sheets so that the pad can be used over and over again. Freud says that the pressure of the stylus’ touches is mediated through the covering-sheet, which acts like a “protective shield against stimuli” in the perceptual apparatus of our conscious mind.¹⁹⁵ The top end of the sheets functions to diminish stimuli from the external world, while the waxed paper is the actual layer that receives the stimuli (or the pressed inscription).¹⁹⁶ However, this sheet of two layers does not hold any permanent traces, being always ready to receive the fresh stimuli coming in. The wax slab is where “the permanent trace of what was written” is left and can be discovered in the right light.¹⁹⁷ For Freud, the functioning of our mental apparatus is realised through these “two separate but interrelated”¹⁹⁸ layers of the system that provides an ever-renewable receptive surface (the conscious) and the permanent traces of the notes underneath (the unconscious).

Freud sees the internal process of memory organisation through the device of the Mystic Writing-Pad, which is a kind of external prosthesis of memory, i.e. a form of archive. According to Sven Spieker, the Mystic Writing-Pad can be seen as “a mechanical archive for storing written memoranda” with three processing steps: the roles of the office for the record perception (the celluloid film), the register for files still in circulation (the waxed paper), and the archive for the permanent storage of files no longer in circulation (the wax slab).¹⁹⁹ The Mystic Writing-Pad is, so to speak, the analogue model of the archival form that preserves physical inscriptions and marks of mnemonic origins in a Freudian way. However, the physical

¹⁹⁴ Sigmund Freud, ‘A Note Upon the “Mystic Writing-Pad”’, 1925, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: The Ego and the Id and Other Works*, translated by James Strachey, Vol. 19 (1923–1925), London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1961, pp. 227-232.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, Freud named this layer for receiving the stimuli as the system *Pcpt.-Cs* (Perception-Consciousness).

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ Spieker, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

form and structure of the archive are replaced with digital archives through which digital memories and records are being accumulated and distributed in a transformational way. Accordingly, our view of the psychic apparatus is affected by digital archivisation because the digital environment is one of the distinctive ruptures that shake the belief in the fixed and absolute mnemonic origins.

Dreyblatt's device replaces Freud's analogue writing-pad with the digital hard disc. The computer hard disc consists of ROM and RAM, which presents the digitalised memory process. RAM (Random Access Memory) functions as a volatile and temporary storage for data in circulation, while ROM (Read-Only Memory) is a more stable form of storage where information is securely retained. When power is switched off, contents in RAM are lost but those in ROM are retained. Thus, in Dreyblatt's account, RAM works like the conscious mind, loading and receiving data, while ROM can be compared to the unconscious mind, not being easily reprogrammed or modified. The display screen itself can be compared to the way in which the conscious mind works – “the appearance and disappearance of the writing [new information or data] with the flickering-up and passing away of consciousness in the process of perception”.²⁰⁰ To put it simply, the chosen texts that originate from ROM are held in RAM and then displayed on the screen surface. The difference between the actual and digital memory process is that contents in the disc randomly emerging on the screen are already determined in advance even though their combinations are unexpected. In other words, while the human psyche is confronted with new information all the time, the computer draws on pre-selected texts only.

Dreyblatt's optical re-enactment of digital memory illustrates the archival transfer from analogue to digital. With regard to the working mechanism of Dreyblatt's *Wunderblock*, Astrid Schmetterling points out that it juxtaposes “(internal) archives of the unconscious” and “(external) archives as prostheses of memory”.²⁰¹ Unlike the analogue version, the digital device enables a much larger volume of data to be processed much quicker. Dreyblatt's digital

²⁰⁰ Freud, op. cit., 1925, p. 231.

²⁰¹ Schmetterling, op. cit., p. 73.

model thus emphasises the reinforced capacity of mnemonic storing and processing and the increasing reliance on digital mnemonic aids today. Derrida also highlights that Freud's mystic pad as "the representational model of the psychic apparatus" is related to the techno-science aspect of archiving and more complicated versions of it – "microcomputing, electronization, computerization" – differently affect the psychic apparatus.²⁰² This means that the technical structure of archiving changes the system, contents, meanings, and relationship with the past and future.²⁰³ The more dependent the human mind is on the digitalised archival exteriority, the less mnemonic traces need to be inscribed and retained in the deeper mind. In the digital world of memory, there is no unknown depth as such like the actual psychic apparatus. However, the volume and speed of digital memory are often beyond human perception. In the electronic world, only codified numbers exist. What is perceivable is only flickering surfaces of screens onto which fragmentary and ephemeral data unlimitedly pass through over and over again. Data creation or deletion is possible with one click. No direct physical contact or sensory experience is required when any memories are externally handed over to digital archives. Through this digitally consigned process, necessary data are activated and repeated to appear and disappear on the surface, not leaving any traces or origins under the surface, unlike Freud's model.

Because of such an increasing level of dependence on the digitised prosthesis of memory, the mental and physical process of memorisation and archiving tends to be rather amnesiac. It is precarious for human memory to be constantly facing automatic links or combinations of data offered by the mechanically processed memory. Dreyblatt's works portray the fact that technical methods and systems affect the structure of what can be archived and how it can be processed and utilised. *The ReCollection Mechanism* (1998) (Fig. 2.2.8) is a "dynamic hypertext-architecture"²⁰⁴ in a darkened room that Dreyblatt installed first at the Felix Meritis Foundation in Amsterdam. A slowly rolling cylinder and multiple screens on the walls, floor, and ceiling show constantly varying digital texts. What is repetitively projected through

²⁰² Derrida, op. cit., 1996, p. 15.

²⁰³ Ibid., p. 17.

²⁰⁴ Claudia Banz, 'Clemens Weiss, Hanne Darboven, Christian Boltanski, Joseph Kosuth, Arnold Dreyblatt', in *Das XX. Jahrhundert, Ein Jahrhundert Kunst in Deutschland*, exhibition catalogue, Nationalgalerie Berlin, 1999, p. 586, cited in Schmetterling, op. cit., p. 73.

the transparent screens is biographical and historical data taken from the book *Who's Who in Central and East Europe of 1933*. Two computers randomly search through and project selected parts of life histories from this biographical dictionary and a female or male voice simultaneously reads the marked words. The layers of digital texts and sounds are gradually inter-crossed and piled up one on another, continuously floating and dissipating in the air. This automatic text-projecting machine is “an oral and visual metaphor of the processes of searching, sorting, and finding, of reconstructing and losing”.²⁰⁵ This process reminds us of a Sisyphean loop, through which reading and re-reading of the forgotten archival fragments are repeated, but completion of the narration of the finite stories of a certain figure fails each time and then intertextual memory in a digital format soon evaporates to repeat the next search. That is to say, Dreyblatt facilitates a loop to dynamically interlink heterogeneous and ruptured life stories of individuals by using a floating, displacing, and transitional sense of a digital writing mechanism. His theatrical site of recollection can be described as a visual and oral form of cultural memory on the ephemeral and ungraspable surface of screens, where the unexpected combinations of archival fragments are newly born and re-born again and again in a non-linear way.

The Sisyphean loop in Dreyblatt's work generates a constant feeling that the boundary between remembrance and oblivion is being dissolved and that the image of archives as a closed and isolated place of memory is being deconstructed. In the digital era, archives are regarded no longer as fixed repositories where rows and rows of materials are physically filed away but as an automatic machine for inscribing data and memory like Dreyblatt's recollection machine. Alaida Assmann claims that the critical alliance between writing and memory is broken by digital writing.²⁰⁶ She recognises the transforming history of writing from pictographic to alphabetical writing, to the analogous writing of the trace, and then to digital writing.²⁰⁷ This does not mean that one emerging medium completely supersedes the previous one. We are dealing with the complicated and hybridised forms of writing and storage. As Assmann points out:

²⁰⁵ Schmetterling, op. cit., p. 73.

²⁰⁶ Assmann, op. cit., p. 200.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 199.

These different media of memory do not simply take one another's place in a linear development. They continue to co-exist, representing different forms of continuity and discontinuity in cultural memory. The link with the past is not in any way or at any time uniform, but it becomes an ever more complex structure of overlapping and intersecting layers of memory, identified as texts, relics, traces and waste.²⁰⁸

The unlimited capacity and efficiency of the digital archive do not always guarantee a permanent storage space as a fair medium as it could be vulnerable to cybersecurity and varying lifespans of technological advancements. Above all, we are dealing with analogue, digital, and hybridised forms of writing and storage simultaneously. The more diversified and sophisticated the digital memory and technology we exploit, the more futile and ephemeral the feelings we experience and the more chaotic and uncontrolled the information we may have to handle. Although the digital archive is still a mnemonic prosthesis as an external device that we believe to have control over, the algorithm of digital memory may be beyond the leverage of human perception. Then, is digital writing either a medium of memory or a medium of oblivion? Sisyphean archival artists like Cooke and Dreyblatt show us a glimpse of the answer since we do not yet have a proper distance from the digital age we are living in. They explore the transitional, shifting, and hybridised phase of archiving; the vulnerability and obsolescence of the archival medium and technology; confluence of analogue and digital writings; and dissolution of remembrance and oblivion. Their works create a constant iteration of interrogating structures and materials of digital archives, reveal the fallible process of stabilised and finalised forms of digital archiving, and consequently regenerate the newly emerging meanings from the fragmentary, fleeting, and unstable data flow again and again.

Such archival ruptures that Sisyphean artists bring decentre the symbolic order of the existing systems and discourses such as the patriarchal return of mnemonic repression, the haunting ideology of colonisation, the image-oriented mass media archives, and digital archives. These slipped ruptures from the archives become polyphonic platforms to further creations. In the next section '2.3. Repetition as Creation', I shall draw attention to a more radically

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 204.

imaginative and fantastical sense of archival works. Their consequential contents or evolving storylines are eventually so far from the original record that they take on rhizomatic directions with no *arkhe* or centre. This unlimited creativity, achieved through repetition, will show how Sisyphean archival art maps undo the repressive and constraining conditions of authority and of disciplines embedded in the archive, and in so doing, open up more playful possibilities.

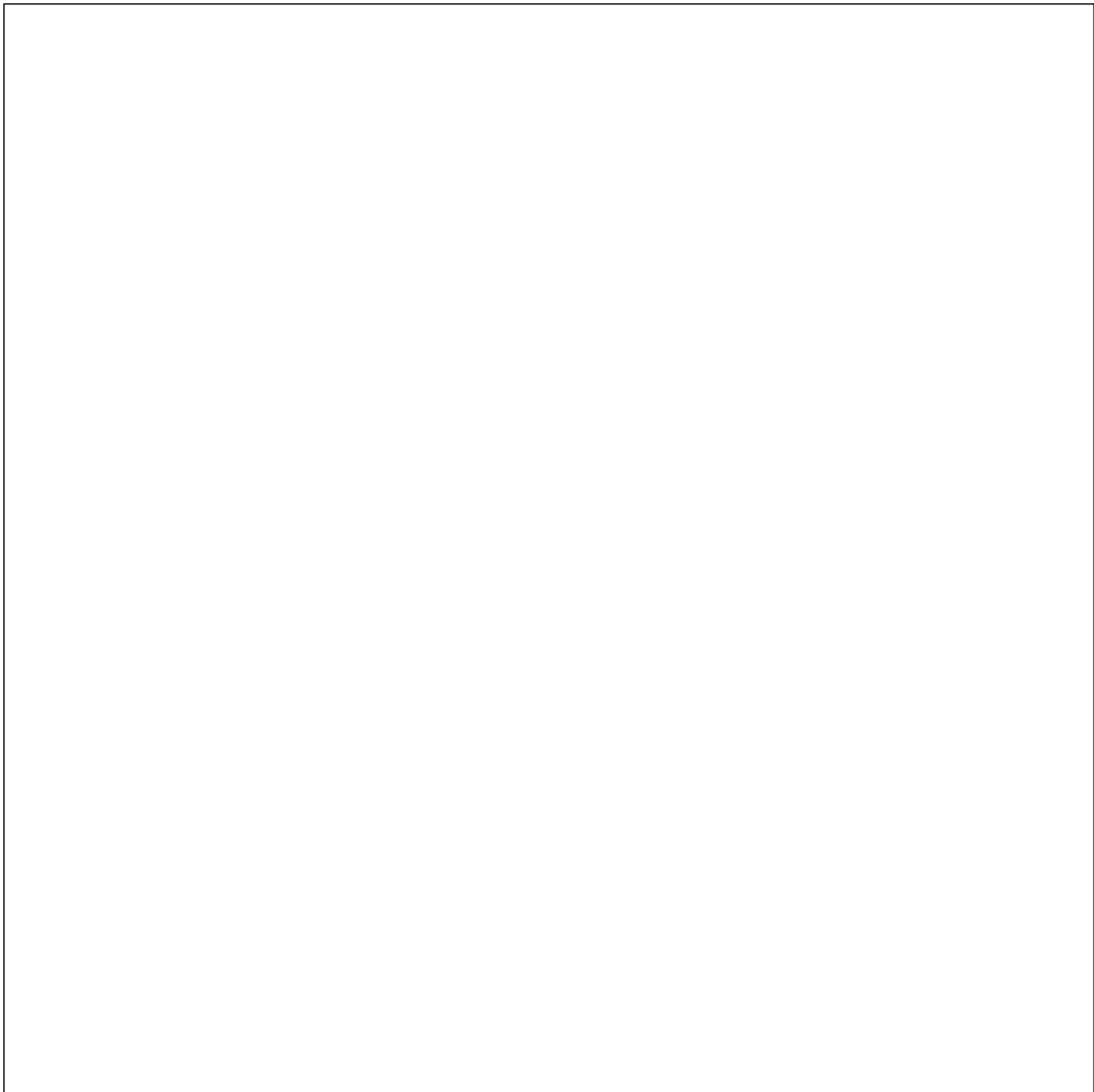


Figure 2.2.8. Arnold Dreyblatt, *The ReCollection Mechanism*, 1998

Felix Meritis Foundation Amsterdam

2.3. REPETITION AS CREATION

“For it is not possible to step twice into the same river ... nor to touch mortal substance twice in any condition: by the swiftness and speed of its change, it scatters and collects itself again ...”

- Plutarch²⁰⁹

The archival/anarchival performativity of Sisyphean archival works ultimately moves towards writing new stories, memories, and times yet to come, once it has destructed or deconstructed the existing order and logic of archival usage and conformity in physical, conceptual, and technical ways. A new creation can arise from destruction. Sisyphean artists' ceaseless engagement with or contestation in the archive unravels entangled and rigid tissues of archival operations as grand narratives through which archival ruptures or loopholes are exposed. Then, fluctuating ruptures slipped from the archive are dynamically enacted and interwoven resulting in a kind of expandable storytelling. Hal Foster recognises a series of archival works that are drawn to “unfulfilled beginnings or incomplete projects” and that have “the will to connect what cannot be connected”.²¹⁰ For example, he highlights artists such as Thomas Hirschhorn and Tacita Dean, whose artworks are “found yet constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private”.²¹¹ In a similar sense, Sisyphean archival/anarchival storytelling is likely to begin with a found and factual piece of archival material, but that material is soon intermingled with or transfigured into a fictitious world. As a result, neither the starting point nor the final destination in the work is obviously determined.

Here, the archive may become, in Irit Rogoff's words, a “construction site for fantasmatic fictions”.²¹² I argue that the constructive storytelling of some Sisyphean archival

²⁰⁹ Plutarch, ‘On the E at Delphi’, 392B quoted on p.117, Jonathan Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophy*, Penguin Classics, London, 1987.

²¹⁰ Foster, op. cit., p. 4 and p. 5.

²¹¹ Ibid. p. 5.

²¹² Irit Rogoff, ‘An-Archy: Scattered Records, Evacuated Sites, Dispersed Loathings’, in Beatrice von Bismarck et al. (eds.), *Interarchive: Archival Practices and Sites in the Contemporary Art Field*, Cologne: Walther Koning, 2002, p.179.

works can be read as intervention, diversion, convergence, recreation, reinterpretation, entanglement, incongruity, or fantasy by which artistic tales critically emerge from the failed vision of symbolic archives. Their stories tend to be intimate, personal, and particular, not articulating any big theories and discourses, and tend to seek diversity instead of conformity. Above all, my argument suggests that these factual yet fictive stories, developed through the repetitive journeys to the archive, are never the same and are freely orchestrated as dispelled from the compulsive desire for returning to the absolute origin from where they were initiated. To put it simply, I shall particularly explore how archival/anarchival rhythms of repetition performed by some Sisyphean artists are kaleidoscopically transformed to produce ever-changing living creations, simultaneously and iteratively navigating through multiple zones of time, space, and memory, and I shall propose what these creations speak for. Let us listen to their dynamic and imaginative archival encounters.

Deleuze's Repetition and Archival Flux of Difference

While Derrida deconstructs the nature of the archive in Freudian terms, Deleuze radically critiques Freud's psychoanalysis, focusing on the theory of the Oedipus complex in his co-written book with Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. However, be warned that Derrida and Deleuze have a different manner and position of approaching traditional areas of philosophy despite their critiques being, in many aspects, similar and affinitive.²¹³ What I bring to the same table is only their critiques of Freud's psychoanalysis and their reinterpretation of the notion of repetition. As has been examined, Derrida sees

²¹³ Derrida seeks the deconstruction of metaphysics from a phenomenological starting point with a study of Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger, whereas Deleuze finds references for his own reconceptualisation of difference mainly in Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Bergson. See Paul Patton and John Protevi (eds.), *Between Deleuze & Derrida*, London, New York: Continuum, 2003, p. 4.

According to Daniel W. Smith, while a philosophical task for Derrida is to overcome metaphysics, for Deleuze, it is rather to construct a different metaphysics. Derrida regards metaphysics to be determined by its structural closure, and there is no outside to it. Thus, one cannot transcend but only deconstruct it from within, disturbing the closure and creating an interruption. Derrida situates his work at the "limit of philosophical discourse", at its margins, and its borders between the closed and immanent totality of metaphysics, i.e. a formal structure of transcendence. In contrast, Deleuze considers metaphysics a fundamentally open structure, dynamic, and in constant becoming, and he sees his works "as being strictly immanent to metaphysics: creation and transformation are possible within metaphysics". The different contexts of their work can be simply summarized as "a horizon of transcendence in Derrida (*overcoming* or going beyond metaphysics), and a function of immanence in Deleuze (*doing* metaphysics)". See Daniel W. Smith, 'Deleuze and Derrida, Immanence and Transcendence: Two directions in recent French thought', in *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

pathological rhythms of repetition forcefully run in the archives and names this archival sickness “archive fever”. Meanwhile, Deleuze accords more positive importance to repetition as creation emancipated from the Freudian scheme of repetition compulsion. Although Deleuze does not directly associate his idea of repetition with the archive, I shall endeavour to illustrate that a performative sense of repetition as creation could connect to an archival flux of constantly emerging differences in terms of a futuristic creativity in this section. At a minimum, this idea conjures up Derrida’s deconstructive argument that the archive is inherently incapable of grasping the past and its origin so that its failed hope can be found in the future, resonating with a fluctuant precariousness and a potential creativity.

Deleuze and Guattari undertake a critique of the Freudian negative notion of desire, namely of libidinal impulses, as a “lack” that is attributed to the Oedipal form of triangulation (Mother – Father – Child).²¹⁴ For Freud, the Oedipus complex is a transcendental and inescapable human disposition. However, Deleuze and Guattari point out that it is repressive, symbolic, and contained, as every manifestation of unresolved desire or related psychic problems tends to return to the root of the Oedipal stage in a Freudian frame. In reaction to this arborescent thinking of psychoanalysis, they propose a critical framework for “schizoanalysis” that considers the unconscious as productive of desire: “Schizoanalysis sets out to undo the expressive Oedipal unconscious, always artificial, repressive and repressed, mediated by the family, in order to attain the immediate productive unconscious.”²¹⁵

Alongside this schizophrenic mode of liberating desire from the Freudian negative charge, Deleuze specifically challenges Freud’s repetition compulsion and death drive in his book *Difference and Repetition*. Here, he refutes that the repetition of the Same is bound to the Oedipal structure and the solely material repetition that Freud postulates. Deleuze argues, “Freud interprets the death instinct as a tendency to return to the state of inanimate matter, one

²¹⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane, Preface by Michel Foucault, London and New York: Bloomsbury, 1983/2013, pp. 91-93.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

which upholds the model of a wholly physical or material repetition”.²¹⁶ In other words, once repetition conforms to the model of the material, it merely remains inseparable from the conflictual dualism between life and death.²¹⁷ He goes on to point out that a negative psychoanalytical schema of “we repeat because we repress...” is inadequate for explaining a positive internal principle of repetition because repetition cannot be explained by “the blockage of representation in repression”.²¹⁸ Deleuze rather perceives repetition as a creative logic that conceals its own variability and proposes a new mode of thought beyond a condition of negation, opposition, resemblance, and identity. For Deleuze, repetition is not repetition of the Same. It cannot be defined by the identity of concepts or representation, in which a “differential” is disguised and displaced: “To repeat is to behave in a certain manner, but in relation to something unique or singular which has no equal or equivalent”.²¹⁹ Therefore, difference and repetition are not opposed to each other. In other words, “difference inhabits repetition”.²²⁰

Deleuze states:

We produce something new only on condition that we repeat – once in the mode which constitutes the past, and once more in the present of metamorphosis. Moreover, what is produced, the absolutely new itself, is in turn nothing but repetition: [...] the repetition of the future as eternal return.²²¹

The eternal return is a force of affirmation, the multiple, the different, which is not subordinated to the One or the Same.²²²

An open-ended and seemingly endless performance of archiving and collecting activity has to do with surveying and mapping the realms that are yet to come. What I am particularly concerned with is the archive in flux or archiving in transition even though the archive ostensibly repeats the same and stable condition of time, memory, and identity. The repetitive performance in Sisyphean archival art always entails transformational, permeable, and

²¹⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, translated by Paul Patton, London, New York: Continuum, 2004, p. 19.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 18 and p. 21.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xviii. and p. 1.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

²²² *Ibid.*, p. 141.

differential elements, and its generated effects and narratives would not remain equal, but rather could be renewed repeatedly without necessarily the same meanings. Every repetitive rhythm in archival art, as a unique series of things, events, or stories, is never truly equivalent to the earlier rhythm within itself or to other archival practices. Perhaps, it might be too reducible to apply the extensive range of Deleuze's philosophy of difference to the issue of archival storytelling. Nonetheless, what I pay attention to is the essence of Deleuzian thought, i.e. the use of "creativity" to overturn fixed and established identities by realising such a flux of difference. In this line of thought, archival creativity activated by a certain group of Sisyphean artists seeks the undoing of any repression and constraints beyond the Oedipal orientation of repetition, resisting a rigid dualism to define the notion of repetition as original and copy and difference as this and not-this. In this case, a Sisyphean archive is being metamorphosed as repetitively embracing self-revealing and self-evolving differences.

Moreover, I have noticed that an archival/anarchival performativity of Sisyphean storytelling tends to be in favour of emancipated association, awkward references, and dramatic de-familiarisation of things beyond certain causal links. The resulting construction produces ever-changing and sprawling stories unrelated to the original reference that began it. In the following chapters, I would like to shed light on a more active sense of archival storytelling that is directed not by a progressive and linear drive, but rather by an iterative, imaginative, and rhizomatic process. In relation to this, Foster argues that archivally driven works appear to ramify like a "rhizome" in the sense that Deleuze and Guattari describe in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.²²³ To put it simply, the rhizome is the idea of endless connectability, with no beginning or end, having only a middle, in contrast to the concept of the root-tree (or the phallus-tree), which has a vertical, hierarchical, centralised structure.²²⁴ Foster's account of archival art is that it develops through "a way of connection and disconnection". He asserts the following: "[An archival impulse] assumes anomic fragmentation as a condition not only to represent but to work through, and proposes new

²²³ Ibid., pp. 5-6 and p. 21.

²²⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Brian Massumi, London: Bloomsbury, 1987/2013, pp. 1-27.

orders of affective association”.²²⁵ This rhizomatic tendency has already been witnessed in some archival works that I have discussed, such as Richter’s *Atlas* and Raad’s *The Atlas Group*, which is featured as “repetition without origins”. Such archival projects seek, de-centralising and rambling, without anchoring in the determined ground of cause and effect or of start and end. Furthermore, I find that the quality of rhizomatic direction unfolds “perverse orders that aim to disturb the symbolic order at large”²²⁶ and has the capacity for developing creative archival fantasy and a fictitious element. This results in the failed visions of history and memory, the multiplication of new stories, the opening up of the unexpected, and external encounters rather than just remaining as the slippage of the traditional logic and meaning of the archive. Thus, it can be said that archival creativity runs between deconstruction and reconstruction all the time.

While the tree necessarily entails the verb “to be”, the rhizome follows a conjunctive logic of “and ... and ... and ...”.²²⁷ According to Deleuze and Guattari, more importantly, these two models of the tree and the rhizome are not opposed to each other, but rather, one model involves another model within itself: “there are knots of arborescence in rhizomes, and rhizomatic offshoots in roots”.²²⁸ It is, so to speak, not about a dualism but about an indeterminacy of “forever rearranging” the two forms.²²⁹ Likewise, if one is describing Sisyphean archival art in this regard, the interrelated aspects of seemingly opposite agencies can be equally recognised within it. As I have endeavoured to postulate up to this point, the idiosyncratic trajectory of Sisyphean archival art is repetitively mapped through similarly conflictual yet simultaneous rhythms: archival and anarchival, mimetic and subversive, institutive and destructive, and legislative and transgressive. These two wheels of Sisyphean performativity are not standing at opposite ends, but rather are rolling over and over together. In other words, Sisyphean archival art is undoing the fixed, established, and commanded

²²⁵ Foster, op. cit., p. 6, p. 21.

²²⁶ Ibid., p. 9, 12, 21.

²²⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, op. cit., 1987/2013, p. 26.

²²⁸ Ibid., p. 21.

²²⁹ Ibid.

archive as “a form of epistemological or mnemonic stricture”,²³⁰ and at the same time, this art begins again to reconstruct the archive with multiple potentials. This concurrent performance of Sisyphean archival art critically questions “a model that is perpetually in construction or collapsing” and “a process that is perpetually prolonging itself, breaking off and starting up again”.²³¹

What I wish to highlight is how archival art in both a Derridean and Deleuzian sense visualises the mechanism of repetition and failure and reworks newly emerging meanings with ever-changing creativity. Some Sisyphean artists contest or resist a trapped vision of the archive in which the impossible dream of hunting down the past and of archiving everything to achieve a total unity of memories repetitively runs in a Derridean sense. Other artists perform eccentric yet creative practices to suggest that an archival structure is open-ended and is unbounded by freely encountered external elements and differences made and continually remade in a Deleuzian sense. I shall continue to explore such Sisyphean archives where artists intervene with or interrupt the archive, so that the subsequent creative failing of archival stories constantly occurs, blurring the boundaries between fact and fabrication and between spatial and temporal perceptions in the archives, eventually evolving into unknown, differently imaginative futures of “and ... and ... and ...”.

Factual yet Fictitious Storytelling

Sometimes, a reality can be rather precisely understood through the fictional lens. As examined in the last section, ‘2.2. Repetition without Origin’, Walid Raad suggests that the mimicry archive blurs the line between fact and fiction in his projects *The Atlas Group*. His challenge is to present the unusual process of documentation itself, performed through repetition, without any coherent, linear, and fixed origin of the traumatic event. The more critical factor here is that Raad’s imaginary means leads viewers to realise multi-dimensional accounts of memories and experiences in a certain historical event, rather than identifying what is either factual or

²³⁰ Sas Mays, ‘Witnessing the Archive: Art, Capitalism and Memory’, in Judy Vaknin et al. (eds.), *All This Stuff: Archiving the Artist*, Libri Publishing, 2013, p. 149.

²³¹ Deleuze and Guattari, op. cit., 1987/2013, p. 21.

fictitious in the archived records. For Raad, constructing the fictional world is “an alternative approach in perceiving and registering historical traces” in which “the historical cohesion, the mechanisms of documentation and preservation of historical artefacts” of the Lebanese civil wars are challenged.²³² Raad himself writes about this fictional approach:

I like to think that I always work from facts. But I always proceed from the understanding that there are different kinds of facts; some facts are historical, some are sociological, some are emotional, some are economic, and some are aesthetic. And some of these facts can sometimes only be experienced in a place we call fiction. I rarely think in terms of fact versus fiction. I tend to think in terms of different kinds of facts and the places that permit their emergence.²³³

In relation to this, Mark Godfrey identifies a certain group of artists, such as Raad, as historians, and argues that some of them prefer to turn their works “to fiction not in order to evade historical representation but to represent historical experience more adequately”.²³⁴ I would say that crossing between truthfulness and plausibility, artists strategically choose the fictive element in their archival practices in order to create multiple entries or playful routes to latent historical (or personal) narratives in archives. Above all, fiction can be an ideal world for artists, as individuals, to liberate themselves from any constraints and disciplines of established ideologies. While Raad utilises fictive components for the process of documenting and as a cataloguing mechanism in order to confront the readings of historical narratives, the artists that I shall introduce below bring more quotidian, emotional, and autobiographical voices into their archival practices, participating as an active storyteller to de-contextualise and re-contextualise the existing archives.

If the archive is not a simple aggregation of the accumulated records so that it does not underlie the unified totality representing a solely dominant narrative and if it does not convey the linear and progressive time, there may be rich possibilities of ruptures in which the active

²³² Nicolas Lambouris, ‘Fabricating: Facts and Fiction in the work of the Atlas Group’, *Photographies*, Vol. 7, No.2, p. 165.

²³³ Gunilla Knape, ‘Afterwords’, in *I Might Die Before I Get a Rifle Walid Raad, Hasselblad Award 2011*, Göttingen: Hasselblad Foundation, Steidl, 2011, p. 99, print, cited in *ibid.*, p.177.

²³⁴ Mark Godfrey, ‘The Artist as Historian’, *October*, No. 120, Spring 2007, No. 120, p. 145.

interactions, free association, and vigorous transformation among things could repetitively occur. Fictional archives, facilitated by Sisyphean artists' imagination and fantasy, interweave new stories with such ruptured dynamics again and again. Interestingly, these appear to have neither a coherent storyline nor a plot structure with beginning, middle, and end. Instead, in their montage-like visual form of archives, fragmented and heterogeneous elements are injected as strange combinations. Unexpected falsity and arbitrary patterns are disrupted at the spine of the narratives in the work. In doing so, their storytelling repetitively creates differences within, from, or outside the archive.

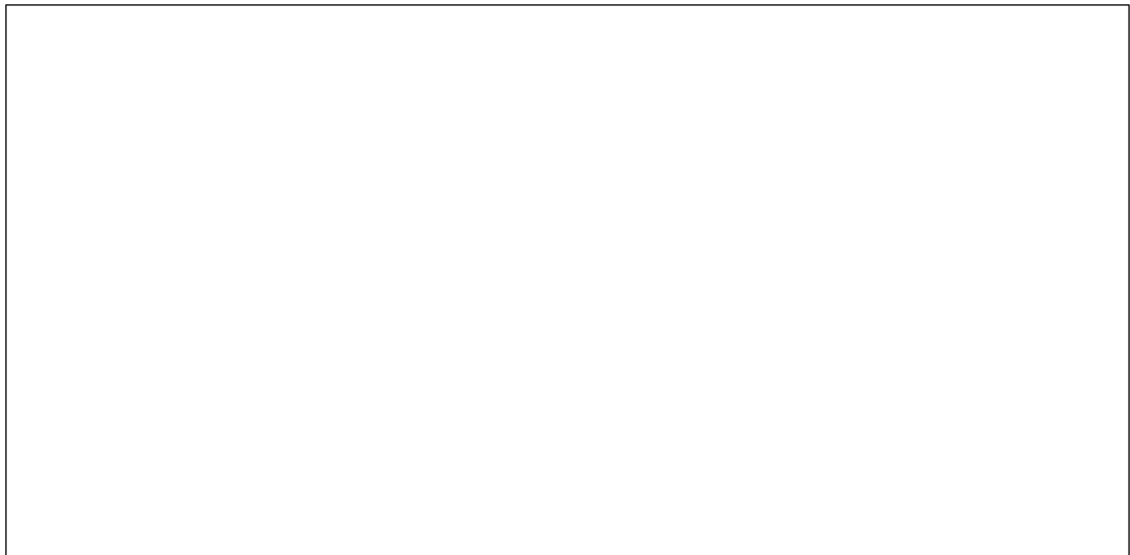
I shall examine the works of two artists: Susan Hiller (b. 1940) and Sophie Calle (b. 1953). Their artistic interventions into the established archive involving error, falsity, and fiction critically suggest the futuristic meanings and value of the archive as being in a state of constant flux and resist the impersonal nature of museum displays and archival representations. Both artists have held interesting exhibitions at the Freud Museum, previously the home of Freud and his family in exile in London. Now a museum, his original consulting room is preserved together with his idiosyncratic collection. Here, in the home of the father of psychoanalysis, these two artists were invited to freely engage with the existing museum context and to realise their own interpretations and voices. Freud himself was a collector of antiquities from Rome, Greece, and Egypt. He was interested in historical objects in relation to the development of psychoanalysis and "his desire to be an archaeologist of the mind",²³⁵ which evoke the present meaning within the existing Freud Museum. John Forrester comments on Freud's collection: "When he died, the collection stopped growing, and turned into the curious entity it now is: a museum within a museum, a collection of antiquities within a museum devoted to the founder of psychoanalysis".²³⁶ In terms of systems of classification and chronological displays, the works of Hiller and Calle deliberately interfere with this authoritative masterly *arkhe* of institutions and redesign the traditional methods of showing the already systemised pieces in a certain unity. They interrupt the organised logic and hierarchical

²³⁵ John Forrester, "'Mille e tre': Freud and Collecting", in John Elsner and Roger Cardinal, *The Cultures of Collecting*, London: Reaktion, 1994, p. 226.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

arrangements of the Freud Museum so that they are consequently catalysts to “mirror the aspects of the past, present and future”²³⁷ in transformative and fluctuant ways.

Susan Hiller, who had previously trained as an anthropologist, developed a research and installation work entitled *From the Freud Museum* (1992–1997) (Fig. 2.3.1), which was linked to a commissioned publication *After the Freud Museum* that recorded its process and preparation. For Hiller, Freud’s collection and the site of the museum itself were the major inspirational sources of her installation works in which an overlay of “historical, biographical, archaeological, familial, personal, ethnographical and psychoanalytic facts” were set to merge in flux.²³⁸ Hiller penetrated these complicated layers of Freud’s collection and started to make her own storytelling with fragments of objects and images from the diverse sources that she encountered. The objects and images that Hiller selected were embedded in the customised brown cardboard archival boxes that were carefully titled, dated, and captioned by herself. Then, a series of boxes was arranged on shelves “within a vitrine within a room within [the] institutional space within [the] house”.²³⁹ Freud’s collection and Hiller’s archival collection were juxtaposed in the same place.



²³⁷ Ibid., p. 7.

²³⁸ Susan Hiller, ‘Afterword’, in *After the Freud Museum*, London: Book Works, 2000, n.p.

²³⁹ Susan Hiller, ‘Working Through Objects’, in Charles Merewether (ed.), *The Archive*, London: Whitechapel Gallery, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 2006, p. 45, originally from Barbara Einzig (ed.), *Thinking About Art: Conversation with Susan Hiller*, Manchester, England, and New York: Manchester University Press, 1996, pp. 226–234.

Figure 2.3.1. Susan Hiller, *From the Freud Museum*, 1991-6/2011, Tate Britain London

In fact, the odd assortment of things in Hiller's boxes was not from the Freud Museum, unlike its title. Hiller collected trivial souvenirs from trips, everyday items, or vintage items that usually had no value, often found in rubbish bins. Hiller once said that her storytelling, with its irrelevant pieces, is a "dreamlike" process through which hidden narratives are told, and each story of the storyteller and the listener are interrelated.²⁴⁰ The titles of each box hint at what narratives are involved: *Nama-ma*, *Cowgirl*, *Führer*, *Heimlich*, *Fatlad*, *Provenance*, *Occult*, *Journey*. For example, in the box entitled *Cowgirl* (1992), there are two white cow-shaped milk jugs and an old photograph of an American woman, Jennie Metcalf, holding a gun. Hiller then writes, "I never heard a woman called a cow until I came to England".²⁴¹ Another box called as *Führer* (1992), meaning "guide" and "leader" in English, contains a German book published in 1935 that she found in discards. The book is about the tragic history of Jews and their literature.²⁴² Other boxes similarly have an enigmatic series of objects: a Classic Mayan calendar, glyphs, and obsidian blades; a modern English toy; antique water bottles that the artist collected from the rivers Lethe and Mnemosyne; a 45-rpm record of Johnnie Ray; and six earth samples of Northern Ireland. Hiller also replicated uncategorised slides from Freud's collection, categorised them again in her own order, and mixed them with other items in her archival boxes. What Hiller presented is literally full of curiosities and oddities from the archived fragments. The artist remarked on this installation:

On one level, my vitrine installation is a collection of things evoking cultural and historical points of slippage – psychic, ethnic, sexual, and political disturbances. Individual items in my collection range from macabre through sentimental to banal. Many of the objects are personal, things I've kept for years as private relics and talismans, mementoes, references to unresolved issues in earlier works, or even as jokes. Sigmund Freud's impressive collection of classical art and artefacts inspired me to formalise and focus my project. But if Freud's collection is a kind of index

²⁴⁰ Hiller, op. cit., 2006, p. 42.

²⁴¹ Hiller, op. cit., 2000, n.p.

²⁴² Hiller, op. cit., 2006, p. 46.

to the version of Western civilisation's heritage he was claiming, then my collection, taken as a whole, is an archive of misunderstandings, crises, and ambivalences that complicate any such notion of heritage.²⁴³

On one hand, Hiller engages with Freud's claimed legacy in terms of references, which is metaphorically reflected here and there in her fragmentary storytelling. In particular, the *Cowgirl* box reveals the artist's pun involving sexual connotations: a female outlaw becomes a control subject holding a big gun that symbolises the penis and the male sexual drive, and at the same time, milk jugs are suggestive of woman's breast and sexual attraction. As Hiller claims, the combination of these two elements and the insertion of this box into the Freud Museum is a way in which she deals with Freud's "sexual insult" to women in a witty manner.²⁴⁴ I consider it a method to mock or disturb the Freudian heritage of psychoanalysis in the house of its father that intensely emphasises patriarchal orientation and describes women as experiencing penis envy or inferiority to men. In addition, the book of Jewish history in the *Führer* box resonates the fact that the family of Freud, who had to go into exile from Austria to England, is also part of this history.²⁴⁵ Those subtle references to Freud in Hiller's storytelling gradually turn into the fictive and jumbled contexts as they are arranged with other sets of peculiar elements, consequently producing more confusions and ruptures of archival narratives at the end.

On the other hand, Hiller's installation focuses on the interferential process itself, beyond the context of the existing archive, as a referential, inspirational source. For Hiller, the archival box on display is not a mere frame but a flexible, oscillatory space for intervention and further creation.²⁴⁶ According to Denise Robinson, "paradoxically ... the process of framing that completes the tearing of the objects from their contexts" happens in Hiller's work.²⁴⁷ In doing so, her use of assembled images, found objects, and fragmented artefacts constantly generates an archival lacuna of traditional taxonomy and representation in the Freud Museum. It then draws viewers to project their own associative memories, misunderstandings, and

²⁴³ Kynaston McShine (ed.), *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect*, exhibition catalogue, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1999, p. 93.

²⁴⁴ Hiller, op. cit., 2006, p. 47.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 46.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 45.

²⁴⁷ Denise Robinson, quoted in Ann Gallagher (ed.), *Susan Hiller*, exhibition catalogue, London: Tate Publishing, 2011, p. 87.

subjective connections to this opened collection with new entries. The Freudian association above is just one possible way for viewers to participate in storytelling with the given fragments. Stereotypical readings or symbolic meanings of archival contents can always be destroyed and altered by the viewer's own story-mapping. There is no leading plot or structural continuity and "no [commanding] way of tying the fragments into an existing circuit or historical trajectory".²⁴⁸ The multi-dimensional storytelling and artistic communication between the artist, Freud, and viewers gently embrace the different levels of archival failure in terms of linearity, legibility, and transmissibility in order to newly narrate manifold forms of stories to come again and again.

Another more intimate and subjective sense of intervention at the Freud Museum is *Appointment* (1999) (Fig. 2.3.2) by Sophie Calle. Calle also attempted to challenge and reconfigure Freud's symbolic archive. Using found objects, photographic images, and her own text, she usually tells autobiographical stories in which reality and fiction subtly intertwine. Its catalogue, *Freud Museum: Appointment with Sigmund Freud*, was published six years after the exhibition. It is a book version of Calle's storytelling. For the exhibition, Calle placed her personal belongings, accompanied by ambiguous commentaries of private memories on pink cards throughout Freud's house. These items included a wedding dress, a bathrobe, a blond wig, a high heel, a cat preserved by a taxidermist, love letters, a wedding photograph, antique figures, a tea cup, and a plate of dessert. All 30 innermost narratives of the artist were landed on the most intimate space of Freud's family home. Ralph Rugoff writes, "Calle's intervention at the Freud Museum injects an aggressive feminine touch into the master's masculine preserve".²⁴⁹ Those objects and images that essentially give out a feminine presence are about confessional stories of Calle's childhood and adulthood, including memories such as her grandmother's suggestion of plastic surgery, her great aunt's death, her three cats, her love affairs, her breasts, and her father's guidance to get psychiatric counselling.

²⁴⁸ Denise Robinson, "'...scarce stains the dust...': Freud's Museum – the Work of Susan Hiller", in James Lingwood (ed.), *Susan Hiller: Recall – Selected Works 1969–2004*, exhibition catalogue, BALTIC, Gateshead, 2004, p. 100.

²⁴⁹ Ralph Rugoff, 'The Culture of strangers', *Financial Times*, Feb, 1999, [Online] Available at: http://www.jamesputnam.org.uk/inv_exhibition_07.html, Last accessed 25 May 2016.



Figure 2.3.2. Sophie Calle, *Appointment: The Wedding Dress*, 1999, Freud Museum London

As a reconstruction of her private memories, the archive of her own personal possessions and stories is intermingled with that of Freud's, and the boundary between her and Freud's objects becomes blurred. For instance, *The Wedding Dress* on Freud's couch is placed as if it were the ghost of one of Freud's female patients.²⁵⁰ On the pink card for *The Wedding Dress*, Calle printed:

I had always admired him. Silently, since I was child. One November 8th – I was 30 years old – he allowed me to pay him a visit. He lived several hundred kilometres from Paris. I had brought a wedding dress in my bag, white silk with a short train. I wore it on our first night together.²⁵¹

Because this work is positioned on Freud's most symbolic vestige, the accompanied text reveals a doubly confusing referent, "he", who might be either "Freud" or "a real lover" of hers.²⁵² This semantic ambiguity of the referent is witnessed again in another episode, *Bad Breath*. The story says:

²⁵⁰ Putnam, op. cit., 2009, p. 158.

²⁵¹ Sophie Calle, *Appointment with Sigmund Freud*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2005, p. 79.

²⁵² Spieker, op. cit., p. 186.

I was thirty, and my father thought I had bad breath. He made an appointment for me with a doctor; whom he assumed was a general practitioner. However, when I arrived at this office, I immediately realised that he was a psycho-analyst. Given the hostility my father always expressed towards this profession, I was surprised. “There must be some mistake,” I said. “My father is convinced I have bad breath and he sent me to a GP.” The man replied: “Do you always do what your father tells you to do?” And so I became his patient.²⁵³

The psychoanalyst Calle meets here can be imagined as either “Freud” in her fictive storytelling or “a real doctor” from her actual experience. What reinforces this suspicion is Calle’s choice of image next to this story. In the black and white photo, Calle, wearing Freud’s original coat, stands at the half-opened front door of Freud’s house as if she had a direct and personal connection with Freud. This image also persuades the viewer to fantasise that Calle had a sexual relationship with him, as implied in *The Wedding Dress* story. This double indication of the referent, blended with fact and fiction, contributes to the dramatisation of strange, voyeuristic, and sexual feelings throughout the artist’s interplay with Freud’s archive. Moreover, Calle in Freud’s coat, standing at the entrance like a gatekeeper, can be regarded as an imagined incarnation of Freud, alluding to the fact that she becomes the newly consigned guardian of the master’s archive. An inviolable and exclusive sense of the master’s archive is immediately undone by this simple guise and witty manipulation of storytelling. As a result, Freud’s mastery over the site, as an *archon*, has effectively failed. In this sense, Calle’s fictional storytelling seems to recall “Freud’s irreversible absence”²⁵⁴ over and over again. The ambiguous openness and fictiveness that the presence of Freud can be imaginatively involved in rather emphasises his haunting absence at the centre of his home.

The artist also evokes a range of memories that are explicitly associated with key notions of Freud’s theory. For instance, in *Young Girl’s Dream*, when she is served a plate of dessert on which two ice cream scoops and a banana are placed like male genitalia, she says,

²⁵³ Calle, op. cit., p. 43.

²⁵⁴ James Putnam, *Inventory: 'Appointment'- Sophie Calle, 1999*, [Online] Available at: http://www.jamesputnam.org.uk/inv_exhibition_07.html, Last accessed 25 May 2012.

“He said one word: ‘Enjoy’. Then he laughed. I closed my eyes the same way I closed them years later when I saw my first naked man”.²⁵⁵ At the same time, there are more sentences, such as, “The letter was signed by a friend of my mother: I assumed from this that he was my real father”.²⁵⁶ “He was wearing the same bathrobe as my father. [...] He became my first love”.²⁵⁷ “In my fantasies, I am a man. [...] it became a ritual: I would come up behind him, blindly undo his pants, take out his penis, and do my best to aim well”.²⁵⁸ All these examples seem to refer to the Oedipus complex that is the core concept in Freud’s psychoanalysis. Freud differently explains how boys and girls experience their repressed sexual desire for the parent of the opposite sex. In psychosexual development, boys’ desire is manifested as castration anxiety, whereas girls develop a form of penis envy. If they successfully resolve these complexes, the boy identifies with his father and displaces his sexual desire for his mother to women in general and diminishes this fear, while the girl identifies with her mother, replacing her absent penis with bearing a baby and transferring her sexual desire for her father to men in general.²⁵⁹

In fact, Calle had grown up without her father because of her parents’ divorce, so she may find her unresolved complex of the absent father in the house of the absent father of psychoanalysis.²⁶⁰ Ironically, her father was also a doctor.²⁶¹ However, the more important thing is, I argue, that the artist uses such iterative references to Oedipal readings in a deliberate manner not in order to advocate Freud’s theorisation but in order to shake it. Calle’s factual yet fictitious storytelling keeps questioning the excessively phallogentric and heteronormative orientation of Freud’s psychoanalysis. Her provocative intervention or feminine mark inevitably recalls the overemphasised role of the father (both Freud and a symbolic father in the Oedipus complex) in the Freud Museum and, furthermore, makes viewers realise that this

²⁵⁵ Calle, op. cit., p. 39.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 73.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 83.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 143.

²⁵⁹ See Freud’s ‘Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes’ (1925), ‘Female Sexuality’ (1931), ‘Femininity’ (1933).

²⁶⁰ Judith Rugg, ‘Sophie Calle’s Appointment at the Freud Museum: Intervention or Irony’, *New Practices – New Pedagogies: A Reader*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2005, p. 52.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

overpowering presence of the father is actually absent and empty. Accordingly, the authoritative discourse of psychoanalysis is being repetitively undermined. This is the point at which the archival/anarchival gesture of the artist is brought in, dismantling major narratives of cultural hegemony. Calle hints that the master's archive is not completed or closed but is always to be seized, revisited, and re-written for further creations.

With both artists' extensive studies of Freud's former house, immediate and playful dialogues between the established institutional archive and the transformational artistic archive could be generatively facilitated. This rather interfering storytelling of returning back to the existing archives again and again is not meant to recoup its origin or authenticity but rather to discover prospective archival potentials that make up different stories. This internal rhythm of repetition to interpolate differences into the existing archives produces new narratives that are reinterpreted and reconstructed over and over again. Viewers who read or engage with these transformed stories also imaginatively recall their own memories, stories, and experiences in both the pre-existing archive of Freud and the newly edited archive of the artists. Then, another page of narratives is once again written by the viewers.

Drifting Through the Past, Present, and Future

The factual yet fictitious storytelling in the works of Hiller and Calle still has a referential connection to the established archive of the master, although it attempts to disembody any banal and stereotypical links to existing contexts. However, the video installations of Elizabeth Price (b. 1966) and of Lindsay Seers (b. 1966) show a more radical sense of archival storytelling as "and ... and ... and ...", far detached from the original reference and creating completely different plots and movements. In their mysterious storytelling, facts are mixed with fiction, and the viewers are offered peculiar constellations of images, sounds, and events instead of a chronological order and outline. They are offered rhizomatic evolvments of scenes and stories, with no centre and with no rooted origin. They start with specific archival pieces of factual events, but theatrical scenes or filmic sequences in the works end up generatively drifting through some place that is unarchived, unknown, and untimed.

Elizabeth Price's Turner Prize-winning work *The Woolworths Choir of 1979* (2012) (Fig. 2.3.3) is a twenty-minute long film that weaves together disparate elements of existing archives and creates cinematic fractal images and sounds that float between social history and fantasy. It is composed of three different parts: The first part is like an infographic architectural survey that draws on the photographs of a medieval church and its sculpture. The second part suddenly brings pop music performances by the 1960s girl band the Shangri-Las. Then, the last part switches to the infamous fire of 1979 that killed 10 people in the Manchester Woolworths department. All sources used were culled from books, performance clips, and news footage from the Internet archives. Price's editing of a discordant assembly, which rhizomatically reconstructs imaginary space and narratives in response to the existing public archives, seems to tell more than just the sum of each part.

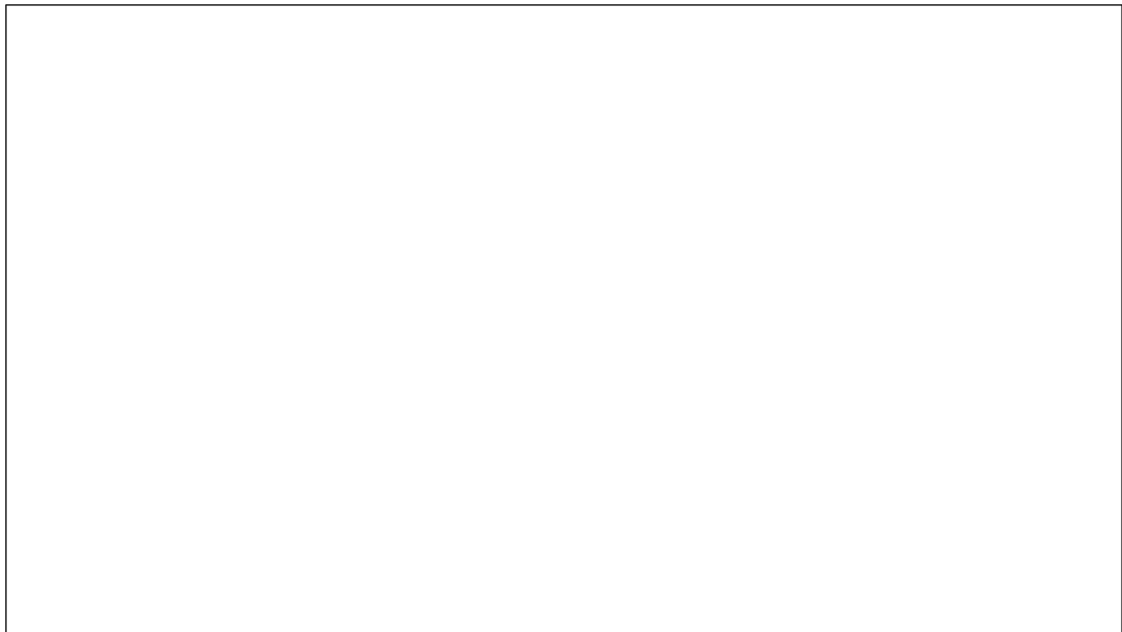


Figure 2.3.3. Elizabeth Price, *The Woolworths Choir of 1979*, 2012

Still Image from HD Video 20 min

A mostly achromatic coloured screen rhythmically moves across images and accompanying texts with background sound. Particular hand gestures are repetitively observed

throughout the film, threading together the three unrelated contents. The artist said that she was strangely captivated by the twisting wrists of the medieval human figures embedded in the church floor.²⁶² A symbolic meaning for this pose is not specified, but Price found out that it probably had to do with an altered moment between life and death.²⁶³ A similar motion can be found in the pop singers' dance movements, which are repetitively overlapped with the scene of people trapped by the bar in the building engulfed in flames waving their hands, desperately appealing for help. Additionally, in the footage of a news interview, an eyewitness to the fire, in a fluster, keeps raising his hand while explaining what he saw. These analogous hand gestures, drawn from different situations, are repeated in close-ups and changeovers, peculiarly evoking unusual vision and emotion. Price once mentioned that the reason why she was so fascinated by the twisting arm in the church sculpture and of the band's dance might be due to her experience as a child watching the trapped people waving hands in the Woolworths fire on television.²⁶⁴ Since then, this tragic gesture had become impressively inscribed in her memory, which was unconsciously stimulated by it to formulate the basic framework of this work. The irrelevant fragments from the artist's personal memory and subjective experience, intermingled with specific references of social history, are ready to carve out new realms of stories, subtly echoing the shadow of death. Price explains her motivation for the piece as follows:

I'm interested in what happens when things move out of categories, so when social history moves out of documentary category, but still remains social historical, and gets combined with something that is a lot more immersive and emotional, like pop music, which has an immediate physiological and emotional effect.²⁶⁵

The sensory experience of Price's work is much more dramatically fleshed out by the repetitive sounds of clapping hands and fingers clicking together with the pop song by the Shangri-Las.

²⁶² Chris Harvey, 'Elizabeth Price: Bringing the Thrill of Pop into Art', *The Telegraph*, 25 November 2013, [Online] Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/10469346/Elizabeth-Price-bringing-the-thrill-of-pop-into-art.html>, Last accessed 3 September 2016.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Elizabeth Price in an interview with Matthew Cain of *Channel 4 News*, October 2012, cited in Louise Simard, 'Projections: Elizabeth Price, *The Woolworths Choir of 1979*, October 9 – December 1, 2013', Musée D'Art Contemporain de Montréal, Québec, 2013, n.p.

With an iteration of the enigmatic twisted-hand pose, handclaps ringing out and clicks function as cues for the next scenes, and the resultant switch of images, languages, and sounds becomes vigorous with overwhelming rhythms. Followed by a strategic repetition resembling motion and sound, the filmic world is gradually mutated to curious narratives and meanings to be expanded each time. Such background music and sound effects based on repetition are integral to disrupting the natural flow and imaginary expansion of the film. In fact, the title of the work, *The Woolworths Choir of 1979*, already mirrors the key role of this musical riff. The word *Choir* here has a dual meaning: one refers to a group of singers and the other refers to the area between the nave and the sanctuary used by singers or clergy in church. As the immersive state of the film runs high, the choir as an architectural term in the first part and the choir as an ensemble of the Shangri-Las' singers in the second part literally become inter-crossed, and both meanings of choir are extended to configure an expressive "chorus" of people singing together. Consequently, the scene of people waving their hands in the Woolworths fire also contributes to the congregated movements of dance and chorus in this trilogy. Hence, the meaning of choir is gradually transformed "to encompass any group of people exhibiting the same behaviour".²⁶⁶ Price's imaginary drama proceeds through the compelling flow of this powerful, iterative chorus that perpetually constructs and collapses the coherency and unity of its narrative and structure.

A dramatic use of texts in the film plays a supplementary role of sewing up each fabric of the heterogeneous events and conveying plain messages. Among these descriptive yet fragmentary texts, there are bold sentences in intense red against the sombre background, such as "We are chorus", "Here they are", and "Close the gaps".²⁶⁷ These are the artist's direct utterances that intermittently appear and re-appear throughout the work. In particular, the messages are delivered in a present tense, with an emphasis on the temporal and spatial proximity of the "here and now". The artist repetitively urges one to connect the filmic world with the present moment in which viewers face the work in real time. This idea is widely

²⁶⁶ Louise Simard, 'Projections: Elizabeth Price, *The Woolworths Choir of 1979*, October 9–December 1, 2013', Musée D'Art Contemporain de Montréal, Québec, 2013.

²⁶⁷ All phrases are extracted from Elizabeth Price, *The Woolworths Choir of 1979*, 20 min, HD video, 2012.

permeated into Price's works of art, as she states when presenting her solo exhibition entitled *Here* at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art in 2012:

I want the viewing space to exist as a parallel or mirroring space to the place constructed within the video, the fictional location proposed or established through the narrative. [...] Each of the video's narrators repeatedly calls the fictional place they are describing 'here'. They insist upon the real presence of the fantasy location – but in doing so, I think they actually disrupt that fantasy, because they remind the viewer of the empirical 'here and now' of the viewing space, and of their own embodied reality.²⁶⁸

For such reasons, the fictional and imaginary space and time of Price's storytelling on the screen and the viewer's space and time while engaging with it interrupt each other, moving across fantasy and reality. Then, iterative rhythms of sound, visual structures, and experiences that the film formulates begin to communicate with or spring to the outer world of the viewers beyond the screen. In other words, Price's perpetually archival yet anarchival storytelling navigates to visit different junctures of the past followed by immensely subjective reasons, but it halts to stay with or repeat the wounds from the past in a repressive state. It cultivates mysterious and captivating stories of here and now, emancipated from any categories or hierarchies of the archive and freely embraces further potential stories of the future as viewers project their own memory and reality onto it.

Otherwise, the whole process of Price's film can also be seen as a revelatory moment where cumulative stories tell of failure, incongruity, and disjuncture of the public archives from which edited links to the stories are constantly conceived inside and outside the film. Perhaps, it shows the ways in which we perceive or utilise randomly given and encountered archives that are easily accessible, exposable, and editable from the Internet these days. They are not indicative of the complete restoration of memory from the past, but rather, are an unlimitedly floating source that is fragmented, incomplete, or sometimes distorted, to be re-arranged and

²⁶⁸ Elizabeth Price's interview, 'Elizabeth Price: *HERE*', exhibition leaflet, 3 February–27 May 2012, Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, 2012, n.p.

reconnected according to the users' repetitive intervention. With the filmic techniques in which repetitive images, languages, and sound are resonated, *The Woolworths Choir of 1979* attempts to alternatively memorialise fragmented remnants of the archives as a means fantastically drifting through the past, present, and future, creating ever-changing repetitions of fluctuated archival fantasies.

Likewise, Lindsay Seers fosters the fictitious narrative of the autobiographical storyline, highlighting more transformative and processual performances of incomplete memory conveyed from the archival remnants. In Seers' works, highly personal, mysterious, and traumatic memories and her own and her family's histories usually become the starting point for storytelling that soon brings in various involved characters and embraces different personas and multiple layers of fantastical tales that leap between the past, present, and future. Her filmic works are often combined with a specific concept of the installation structure and with publication in the form of a novel. While these three components of the work collaborate and exist independently at the same time, Seers' puzzling journeys puts the pieces of the past together, makes liberal and fanciful conjunctions between archival clues, and proliferates performative and simultaneous sequences of factual yet fictitious narratives over and over again.

It Has To Be This Way 2 (2010) (Fig. 2.3.4), a film integrated with an installation and a novella by the writer M. Anthony Penwill that followed a previous piece of the series, *It Has To Be This Way 1* (2009). It begins with Seers' search for her missing step-sister, Christine Parkers, who had suffered from memory loss. Seers' storytelling is initiated by the remaining photographic archives of both her sister's and her own old letters and notes. With a chance selection of archival fragments, Seers retraces her step-sister's steps. Seers finds that Christine suffered loss of memory after a moped accident and afterwards disappeared in Rome, where she had been researching the life of Queen Christina of Sweden and confirmed that she previously travelled to Ghana as part of her research in 1966.²⁶⁹ While Seers' focus in *It Has To Be This Way 1* revolved around Christine's traces in Rome, her second search for *It Has to Be*

²⁶⁹ Ole Hagen, 'Lindsay Seers: It Has To Be This Way 2', exhibition essay, Statens Museum for Kunst Denmark, 2010, n.p., [Online] Available at: <http://www.smk.dk/en/visit-the-museum/exhibitions/past-exhibitions/2010/lindsay-seers/essay-by-ole-hagen/>, Last accessed 12 September 2016.

This Way 2 restaged Christine's visit to Ghana. With the fact that Christine and a mysterious figure known as "S" had been drawn to alchemical and occult experiments in the course of their research, Seers' filmic screen is full of enigmatic omens and signs, and its narratives are extensively developed through an eccentric tangle of objects, figures, and places. Seers makes her journey to Ghana, wearing a colonial costume, as her step-sister did. The place she first visits is the slave fortresses that used to be the Gold Coast of European colonisers, including Sweden, Denmark, and Britain.²⁷⁰ This disgraceful colonial history of slave trade in Africa leads Seers to encounter her own traumatic family history, which includes her mother, Pamela Parkes, who had left her and Christine to live with her step-father in West Africa where he was involved in diamond smuggling.²⁷¹ For these reasons, the whole drama is spanned by the repetitive appearance of faint diamond images alongside the voice of the main narrator, Pamela Parkes. The fortifying sculpture of the viewing space imitates the slave fortress through which viewers enter a completely different time and space. The space inside is where multiple traumas of personal and collective levels are intermingled and where the virtual reality of Seers' storytelling intersects with the actual world.

Seers' journey and the film plot gradually become entangled in the blurred boundaries between fact and fiction and "blend into an extensive narrative web".²⁷² However, there is nothing concretely resolved in this process of finding the mystery of Christine's disappearance. Although Seers tracks the given archival clues and collects different testimonies and viewpoints from the characters involved, her travels hardly work to investigate the truth, but seem to revel in misleading the travel's goals and creating a picture of the fragile state of archival credulity and the instability of memory itself. According to Louise Wolthers, in Seers' art, the photographs as an archival medium turned out to be insufficient to reconstruct the past,²⁷³ and

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid. and Marianne Trop, 'Lindsay Seers: It Has To Be This Way 2', exhibition leaflet, Statens Museum for Kunst Denmark, 2010, n.p.

²⁷² Trop, op. cit., n.p.

²⁷³ Louise Wolthers, 'Escaping the Fortress of Memory: Archive Pathology in Lindsay Seers's Art' in Gundhild Borggreen and Rune Gade (eds.), *Performing Archives/ Archives of Performance*, Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2013, p. 442.

the referentiality of the original event was constantly disturbed and dislocated.²⁷⁴ Considering this piece in the light of archival/anarchival performativity, Seers' disturbing archive seems to fail as a defence against memory loss due to her performative uses of the multi-layered fragments of signs and meanings in unconventional ways.²⁷⁵ Wolthers identifies Seers' artistic strategy as "a misperformance of archives", and continues by stating that:

The dominating structure of re-appearance, re-enactment, repetition, copying, and (failed) attempts of re-presenting past experiences can be interpreted in terms of trauma-related behaviour. [...] In art, this is achieved by juxtapositions of fact and fiction, collective and personal, past and present, a strategy we recognised in Seers's installations where the open wounds are externalised and repeated through a variety of materials, symbols, and figures without ever approaching what originally caused the wounds.²⁷⁶

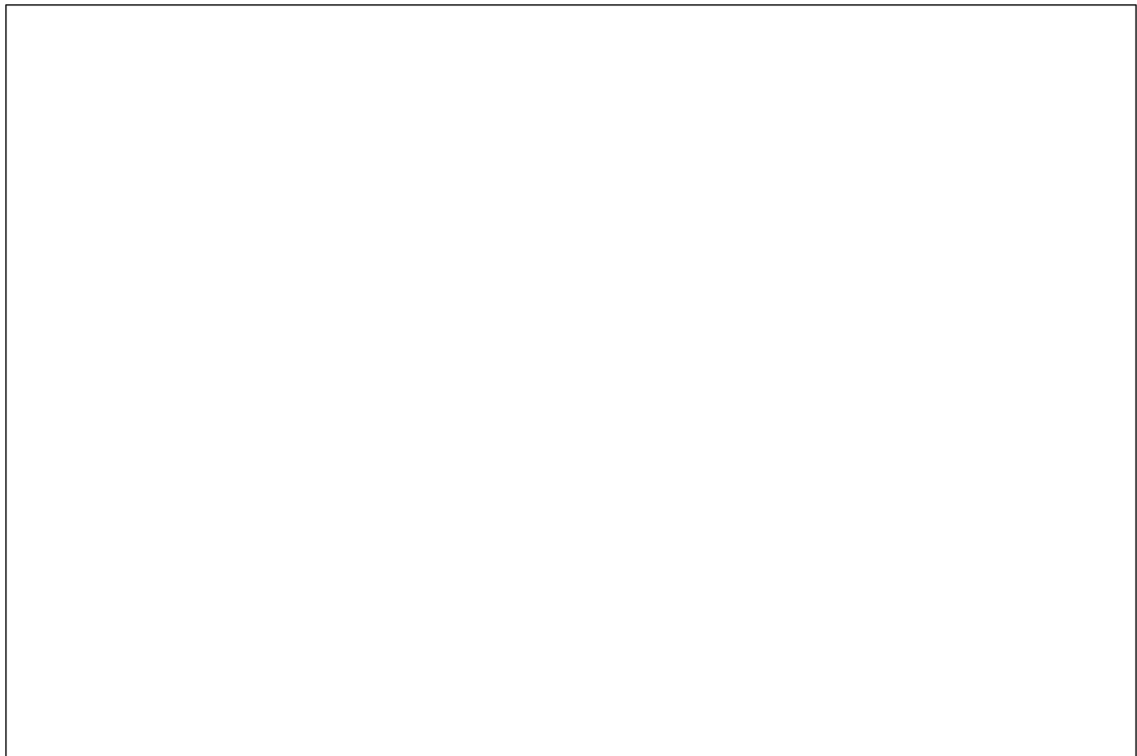


Figure 2.3.4. Lindsay Seers, *It Has To Be This Way 2*, 2010/2011, BALTIC Gateshead

²⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 445.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 437.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 434.

This performative experiment of surviving archives and repetitive failure with archival memory suggests a more productive account of mnemonic tales multiplied by external forces and rhizomatic expansion. Seers' repetitive recall and efforts to reconstruct the past never resolve issues regarding the origin of her and her family's trauma. Instead, altering routes or alternative approaches to both personal memory and historical events, at large, are repetitively rendered through the unpredictable and unsettling reconfiguration of archival incompleteness. There is no linear chronology, no rational cause and effect in the course of research, and no obvious fact finding. There are only constantly decentring central storylines encompassing chance and chaos. This archival/anarchival loop of repetition and failure in *It Has To Be This Way 2* unfolds various clues that are all connected but create different conclusions again and again.

For Seers, the past is something that is not fixed with an original starting point, but rather, is always fluctuating and reconstructed. The past, therefore, has a consistent influence on present and future. In this context, another work of hers, *Nowhere Less Now* (2012) (Fig. 2.3.5), a film and a site-specific installation at The Tin Tabernacle, Kilburn, in North London, commissioned by Artangel, manifests interlocking memory and history crossing over the timescales of the past, present, and future. For 35 minutes, Seers' filmic imagery and the theatrical scenario are more extensively enhanced with regard to the concepts of time and memory, again through the archival/anarchival performativity. In this case, a novel *Nowhere Less Now* by Ole Hagen, published in conjunction with the film, is itself interesting, as it is a narrative on Seers' work and thus a part of the piece. However, it is also an independent monologue written from Hagen's perspective. Seers' film and Hagen's writing influence each other by simultaneously evolving into the complicated fantasy of fact and fiction. As shown in *It Has To Be This Way 2*, there is similarly an iterative pattern in Seers' storytelling. It begins again with a specific set of archival origins about Seers' great-great uncle George Edwards, a former officer in the British navy, and his wife Georgina. Seers was drawn in by specific photographs from her family archives, which depicts George, along with other naval crew on board the HMS Kingfisher, and Georgina wearing a dress and makeup of Masonic ceremonial design for uncertain reasons. The seed of one name, George, triggers Seers' relentless epic

expedition for this time. The only known clues about George include that he was born in 1866 with different coloured eyes and he sailed to Zanzibar in the late nineteenth century in order to liberate local slaves but ended up drowning.²⁷⁷ Coincidentally, Seers realises that she was born precisely a hundred years after George's birth. Such serendipitous discoveries continuously open a rhizomatic development all the way through her archival journey. The artist dressed in a Masonic ritual gear, like aunt Georgina, makes a trip to Zanzibar in search of the fateful connections between George and herself.

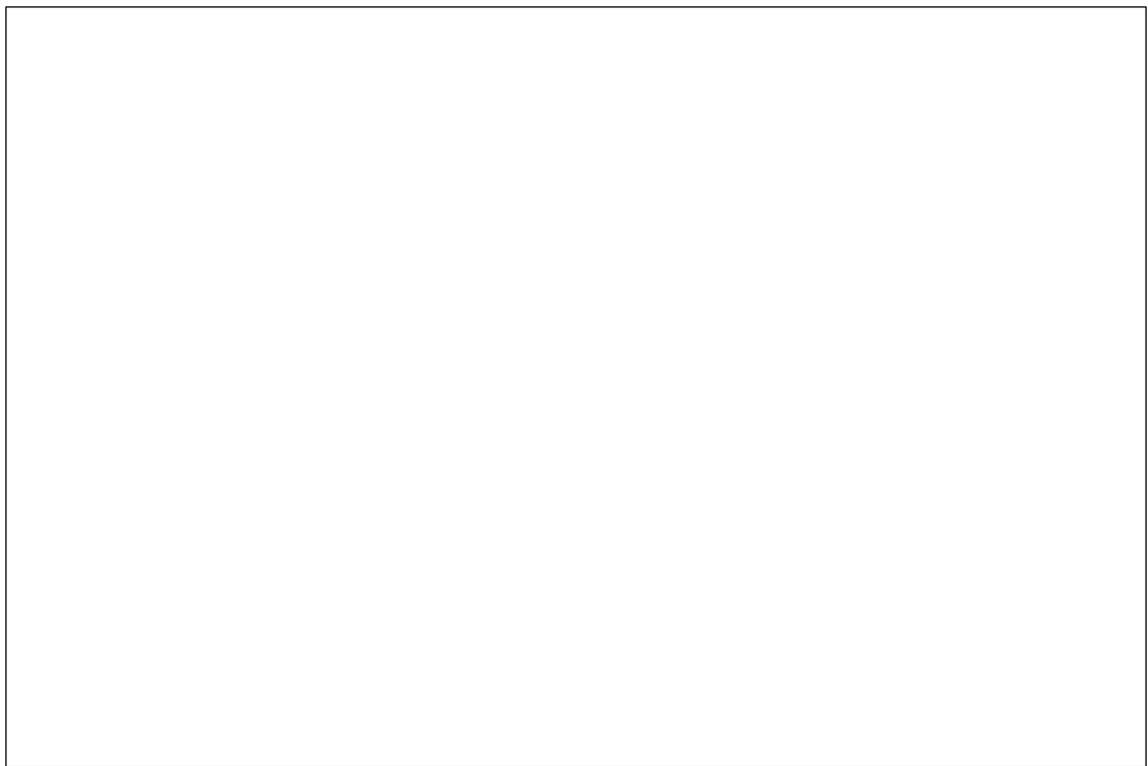


Figure 2.3.5. Lindsay Seers, *Nowhere Less Now*, 2012, Artangel, Tin Tabernacle London

A corrugated-iron church bears the site of the capsized ship installation. It becomes a kind of time machine for both the artist and viewers to imaginatively move across different places and times. When viewers enter the church, they are asked to stand by in a wardroom

²⁷⁷ Rachel Cooke, 'Lindsay Seers: Nowhere Less Now – Review', *The Guardian*, 2 September, 2012, [Online] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2012/sep/02/lindsay-seers-nowhere-less-now>, Last accessed 26 September 2016.

where various kinds of naval memorabilia such as naval crew photos, trophies, maps, and manuals are displayed. A portrait of George with different-coloured eyes can also be spotted among them. In fact, this building had been a base for a troop of local Sea Cadets for half a century and its interior was already decorated by them to resemble the inside of a Royal Navy ship.²⁷⁸ Viewers then soon become confused about whether what they are seeing actually belongs to the former occupier of the premise or is fabricated as Seers' film set. Afterwards, they are ushered into the darkened room, the inside of the overturned ship, where they face two circular screens on which Seers' phantasmagoria is compellingly unrolled. The screens project a multimedia collage of fragmented clues and memories, veering between photography, graphic animation, documentary film, and performance by the artist. In this shifting stream of images, Seers appears as different protagonists and personas, leading and disorienting its exploratory narrative. Her journey, which starts with a true story of George and Georgina, is followed by undetermined scenarios and is riddled with several coincidences. She finds the tin tabernacle churches in Africa similar to the one that houses Seers' film installation in London and finds a huge baobab tree on which George's name and the name of his ship are carved.²⁷⁹ However, nothing is explicitly resolved again in the end: Is the person who carved his name on the tree really Seers' great-great uncle George or someone with the same name? What precisely happened to George? Why did Georgina wear a Masonic costume, or what made her keen on engaging in a Masonic ritual? Seers' repetitive steps continue to raise "and... and... and..." questions, which remain unanswered and open ended.

Additionally, the temporal structure of the narrative is peculiar in that the past, present, and future coexist out of linearity. Along this surreal narrative, different Georges from the past and the future simultaneously appear. Seers receives a letter from a future George. By this time, the border between reality and fantasy and between past and future becomes even harder to tell. In Hagen's book, the future George monologises, "What disturbs me is the idea that if human

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Richard Dorment, 'Lindsay Seers, Nowhere Less Now, Tin Tabernacle: Fantastic voyage into the unknown', *The Telegraph*, 3 September 2012, [Online] Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/art-reviews/9518481/Lindsay-Seers-Nowhere-Less-Now-Tin-Tabernacle-Fantastic-voyage-into-the-unknown.html>, Last accessed 27 September 2016.

consciousness transmigrates, and if all linear time is one in pure virtual time, then all my former incarnations and all my future ones are living at the same time with me. We are all just inhabiting different dimensions!”²⁸⁰ Similarly, Seers says “the dead live with us” and “[I have] the sense of a stranger always within”.²⁸¹ Perhaps what Seers’ intuition penetrates through or what her vision unleashes is a failing “tyranny of linear time”²⁸² and the conditional nature of memory and history in flux beyond the quest for literal facts. More interestingly, in the future in George’s world, there are no concepts of archives, history, or still images.²⁸³ In other words, it is a world emancipated from archival obsession, a world in which two-dimensional images have been banned and a linear time of history has ceased to exist. Again, in Seers’ world, photographic images are not a simple reference of memories but are elements through which “past, present, and projection into the future interpenetrate”.²⁸⁴ Simultaneously travelling through different zones of time, historical photographs become a variable passage to infinitely different potentials that are interwoven with facts, fakes, familiarity, strangeness, presumption, and imagination. Seers’ concept of simultaneity of different times and beings is already drawn in the heterochromia condition of George when the voice of the narrator tells the viewers that different coloured eyes allude to an unborn twin within oneself. For Seers, this idea that another potential being is already embedded in oneself is in parallel with the sense that past and future are always embedded in one another. For such reasons, Seers’ storytelling is undeterred by a rigid division between a scientific explanation of DNA and heterochromia and re-enactment of Masonic rituals, between personal and collective memory, between macro and micro history, between fact and fiction, and between reality and fantasy. They are all already embedded in one another.

²⁸⁰ Ole Hagen, *Nowhere Less Now*, Artangel, 2012, p. 25.

²⁸¹ Richard Cork, ‘Lindsay Seers: Nowhere Less Now, The Tin Tabernacle, London’, *Financial Times*, 10 September 2012, [Online] Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/aa116eb6-f8d4-11e1-8d92-00144feabdc0#axzz26BQB5HCO>, Last accessed 29 September 2016.

²⁸² Jo Applin, ‘Lindsay Seers: Artangel at The Tin Tabernacle’, *Artforum*, December 2012, [Online] Available at: http://www.lindsayseers.info/sites/www.lindsayseers.info/files/art_forum_dec_2012.pdf, Last accessed 29 September 2016.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

²⁸⁴ Michael Newman, ‘Lindsay Seers’ Extramission 6 (Black Maria)’, accompanied with the exhibition in Gallery TPW, 2011, n.p., [Online] Available at: <http://www.gallerytpw.ca/publications/pdf/1102-LSeers.pdf>, Last accessed 5 April 2014.

Furthermore, Seers prefers to repeat her works as a series again and again. For example, *It Has To Be This Way* has four different versions, while *Nowhere Less Now* was repeated once again at Hayward Gallery in 2014. This series of works repeats the same starting point of the story, but the archival/anarchival procedure of each work is eventually morphed into new narratives and developments with slight changes in the physical structure of their installation and way of screening. Seers' "and... and... and..." archival copies of differences suggest again that every story unrolled in the works is interconnected with the others and they are embedded in one another so that viewers can always "enter the middle of narratives" at any point.²⁸⁵

To wrap it up, the storytelling of both Elizabeth Price and Lindsay Seers starts with particular sets of photographic and documental records, but their efforts to reconstruct the past events that the archive indicates repetitively fail owing to insufficient information and deliberate misperformance. Whenever their journeys that seek the truth have failed, the filmic stories expand into a rhizomatic web of memories that entwine fact and fiction. The iterative, rhizomatic, and imaginative process of the artists' archival/anarchival storytelling keeps moving forward. The movement is generative and multiple rather than retrospective and regressive, in line with the original cause or purpose of what it sets out to find. In other words, their archival/anarchival energy works for a boundless expansion of the narratives travelling across a multitude of times and beings, refraining from a nostalgic reduction to the past and a singular world of the present being. The archival/anarchival rhythms of repetition weave similarities and resemblances of past events related to personal memory and trauma but gradually break a repressive cycle of repetition and ultimately perform different stories. As perpetually deconstructing and reconstructing existing orders and contexts and arranging and re-arranging fragmented and heterogeneous things, the archival/anarchival performativity of Sisyphean archival art evolves by itself. This kaleidoscopic territory that Sisyphean artists are mapping is somewhere beyond the linearity of historical time and the significance of symbolic order. The unpredictable unfolding of their mapping incessantly leads to a kind of unarchived, unknown, and untimed world that we have never experienced before. They might suggest the

²⁸⁵ Hagen, op. cit., 2010, n.p.

most feasible or emancipatory way of creativity in order to have access to the past, present, and future memory, mediated through an archive in a memory crisis of the contemporary world.

Throughout Chapter 2, I have elaborated the multifaceted features of repetition as archival/anarchival performativity. The external and internal rhythms of repetition are pervasively run in Sisyphean archival art. Such repetitive rhythms as irresistible energies are straightforwardly externalised in some types of archival art, whereas they are subtly operated under the surface in others. Otherwise, both external and internal repetitions often co-work at the same time as interactive poles of destructing and constructing the context of what the archival art deals with. In any case, the archival/anarchival force of repetition questions the generalised norms of the archive, dismantles the stability and consistency of existing archival orders and functions, and corrodes any authoritative and hierarchical voices and narratives in the archive. These archival ruptures, then, activated through Sisyphean archival art, open more possibilities for ever-growing creativity.

In the first section, '2.1. Repetition as Accumulation', I highlighted Sisyphean artists who are volunteer archivists. The artists' personal obsessions sustain collection drives so that the resultant accumulation becomes an art production by means of the archive. Ostensibly echoing a bureaucratic and administrative archiving procedure, those archival arts favour accumulative lists, enumeration, and serial patterns as visual languages and are rather interested in unarchivable immateriality. Above all, this iterative process and outcome of archival art often merges with existing institutions. In particular, an orderly hoarding type of archival art more intensely shows the contradicting nature of Sisyphean archival art within the institutional context. The pathological and extreme rhythm of orderly hoarding disturbs the existing criteria for selection and preservation of institutions, and, at the same time, reveals its own vulnerability and limitedness as it relies on the language and territory of the institutions that it critiques. This is a self-reflective and self-evidentiary way of critiquing for both institutions and archival art.

In the second section, '2.2. Repetition without Origin', the more internal domain of repetition has been explored together with the background of the nineteenth century paradigm

shift. The Western archival mentality, as an aspect of modernity, has been formulated under the major changes of this era: Freud's psychoanalysis, the invention of photography, and the expansion of imperialism. The material and immaterial conditions of the archive have been directly and indirectly affected by these psychological, technical, and colonial aspects. Thanks to Derrida's critical readings of Freudian impressions through the archive, the deconstructive relationship between the pathological repetition of repression and of finding origins in memory and archives has been called to attention. Derrida identifies the nature of the archive as "archive fever", i.e. as a kind of archival sickness that returns the force back to its origins. Derrida emphasises that the archive is inherently incapable of grasping the past and its origin and finds its failed archival hope in the future. The absolute state and power of origins in the archive have been critically attacked by a group of Sisyphean artists whose projects are engaged with the mythical archives of colonialism. Hegemonic and comprehensive methods of knowledge accumulation and history writing by colonisers inevitably produced a distorted, exaggerated, and idealised set of archives. The archival/anarchival performativity of Sisyphean archival art, based on strategic rhythms of repetition, demonstrates the void of its aimed idealisation and totalitarianism through its own counter archives. Another type of mythical archive can be mass media archives that have a close relationship with the reproductive technique of photographic and digital images. With more complicated and multiple types of media, the bombarding of contemporary digital media culture with reproductive images contributes to oblivion rather than to remembrance. Among the overwhelming plurality of repetitive images, the function of photography as documentary evidence and as a truthful mnemonic aid has collapsed. Mainly, using a reproductive condition of images, Sisyphean photographic archives rather dramatise such a memory crisis by unfolding discontinuous, unlimitedly expandable, and non-linear sequences, without any origins or centres. Moreover, with the development of digital archiving, more complicated and conflictive issues around a digital mastery over memory and digital oblivion have emerged so that the tension between being archival and anarchival seems to be more intensified.

The imaginative and fantastical sense of the archival/anarchival performativity activated by the dismantled ruptures or loopholes, formed from the remnants of archives has been discussed in the last section, '2.3. Repetition as Creation'. Unlike Derrida, Deleuze accords more positive importance to repetition, emancipated from the Freudian scheme of repetition compulsion as creation. With the essence of Deleuzian creativity being to overturn fixed and established identities, I have shown that a dynamic archival flux of difference can emerge. The archival creativity of Sisyphian artists' factual yet fictitious storytelling is generated again and again, undoing any repression and constraints beyond the only material condition or the patriarchal orientation of repetition. Their playful intervention, re-enactment, and fantasy, engaged with the established archives, intriguingly challenge the ways in which the historical event or autobiographical experience are represented. The archival residues are repetitively visited, interrogated, misread, and reconstructed as narrating towards the unknown phases of past, present, and future time and space. What they are mapping through a constant performance of constructing, collapsing, and reconstructing of the archive is often rhizomatically directed, having no beginning or end, only a middle.

While Chapter 2 has extensively examined the idea of repetition, Chapter 3 will move on to explore another wheel of archival/anarchival performativity, the realm of failure. With a focus on the positivity and capacity of failure, I shall shed light on how any failing moments, errors, flaws, and/or anomalies in the archive can produce unusual and irregular rhythms in the archive and what it means to be the bodily and participatory performance of archives on the premise of failure.

CHAPTER 3. FAILURE

Another essential axis of archival/anarchival performativity, alongside repetition, is the infiltration into the archive of failing moments. The unusual and irregular rhythms of failing moments, malfunctions, errors, and anomalies can be intentionally introduced by the archival projects of Sisyphean artists. In performance and queer studies, the moments of failure are often positively appreciated as an alternative pedagogy by which the current goal-oriented culture is critiqued. In this sense, failure can be framed “not as [a] crucial step on the path to success but as a stumbling block” that makes us critically interrogate and re-evaluate directions.¹ Accordingly, my questions are as follows: How can a generally negative perception of failure be differently perceived as a critical and navigational tool in the field of performance that shakes the habitual mode of thoughts and experience? How can the positivity of failure be actualised in contemporary archival art in a performative way? What types of rhythmical failures are witnessed and how can this variety of failures be discussed in the realm of archives and archival art? What I wish to suggest is not a dichotomous model of success and failure in archival art production but rather an intriguing step sideways to read archival issues on the premise of failure through Sisyphean archival art.

As I briefly noted in the introduction, Aaron Williamson’s *The Collapsing Lecture* was a piece of performance to show an idea of failure. The lecture was delayed for more than 20 minutes. When Williamson finally arrived, he poked his head through the half-opened door with a puzzled look and entered in a hurry with a huge suitcase. Although he tried to say something as an opening line, his mumbling voice, caused by his deafness, was not enough to carry what he intended to say. He did not seem to settle himself down properly to commence the lecture. Unfortunately, things went from bad to worse. He tried to show a video of his former performance practices, but the DVD player did not work because of some technical problems with the desktop. He then played another copy, but it also failed to play. He suddenly

¹ Johanna Linsley, ‘Stupid, Paranoid, Wonderful: Staging Non-Knowledges in the Pedagogical Encounter’, in Roisin O’Gorman & Margaret Werry, ‘On Failure (On Pedagogy): Editorial Introduction’, *Performance Research: On Failure*, Vol. 17, No. 1, Feb., 2012, Routledge, p. 59.

started to talk in sign language together with his sign interpreter who was present, asking her for help, but she refused to do so. He then attempted to write something on the whiteboard, but every pen he tried to use had run out of ink. He even spilt water on the table in his flustered state. As the lecture collapsed, the tension in the room heightened. The audience were wrestling with the uncomfortable feeling of waiting to see what this bewildered and nervous lecturer would do next. When this disastrous situation was almost halfway through, I finally realised that the joke was actually on us, the audience. During the lecture, two groups of audience were evident: one group made the effort to be polite and supportive, still regarding the lecture as real, while the other group comprised people who knew from the outset that he was acting a character, i.e. intentionally making the lecture chaotic. A few from the “in the know” group sometimes giggled in a seemingly insensitive manner. The more people realised the lecture was a performance, the more laughing people could be spotted. After 45 minutes, Williamson’s attitude abruptly changed when he asked, “Any questions?” This was an awakening moment for the audience to switch over to the real world. During the Q&A session, there was no more “collapsing”. He spoke in a calm and orderly way, properly responding to the audience’s questions.

I observed four noteworthy features in Williamson’s performance, which I shall relate to the realm of archival art in this chapter. The first point is that it effectively shows the performance as “an expanding frame”² and as a medium in which fallible, ambiguous, and struggling conditions of the event take place on purpose. Williamson’s fallible attempt indicates “a performance whose hidden objective was to reveal the dubious premise and scaffolding of the formal lecture, to deliberately ‘collapse’ it”.³ Williamson creatively invented a performative setting on which an everyday situation, like an ordinary lecture, is superimposed on the theatrical stage. In other words, this is the moment when the difference between everyday performativity and theatrical performativity is being collapsed. As a result, the idea of successful lecturing as a well-planned unity is broken down and the discontinuity of the

² Aaron Williamson, ‘The Collapsing Lecture’, in Gavin Butt (ed.), *Performing/Knowing*, Birmingham: Article Press, 2010, p. 55.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

storyline and conceptual ruptures of either success or failure are unveiled. This failing maps different contours of the battle with customary consciousness and activities in all dimensions of daily life.

The second point is that the bodily engagement of the artist as performer and the participatory spectatorship are core components here. Williamson's simple yet excellent use of slapstick instead of textual presentation or conventional teaching drove the collapsing situation. The lecturer who has mastery of the whole session does not exist in this performance. Instead, his performance seems to propose the impossibility of the privileged domain of any performer, director, or actor. It also signals that there will always be a possible communication failure between performer and audience. Accordingly, the audience is confronted with a liminal stage between the real and the fictional while struggling to affirm whether the lecture is a performance or not. It is quite a stressful task for the audience to bear this disruptive and disorderly condition. Such discomfort calls upon people's physical and psychological interaction with and participation in the situation. In fact, several attempts were made by the audience to assist him. One of the efforts at the micro level was to patiently wait for his success. Nobody left the room until the lecture (as performance) was finished. Some other people reacted more supportively. One person shouted at him "We are here for you", showing support, and Williamson would not have been able to find a proper board marker without the help of several students. In addition, the fact that two "knowing" and "unknowing" groups of audience coexisted made Williamson's performance more vulnerable and precarious because the situation could have been differently directed by their unexpected reactions at any time. In short, Williamson's performance of failure irritated the audience by pulling them from the secure position of passive listeners to the edge of an unprecedented process. The audience became part of the process itself.

Third, *The Collapsing Lecture* proposes that the purposeless and unproductive event is a mode of failure. Williamson repeated the silly behaviours and mistakes again and again and hardly reached the goal of a successful lecture. He staged the tiresome process itself where the task was set but never properly executed. People are likely to judge this kind of case as failure

with a highly negative connotation. However, the moment of struggling and confusion in Williamson's performance cannot be defined as a certain category of success or failure because it is not only the failure of a lecture but also the success of a performance. Would this type of artistic practice open up other possibilities of failure that are not evaluated against the idea of success? The relentless performance based on the cycle of repetition and failure, like a Sisyphean task, may be able to trigger a more creative, playful, and liberating way of knowing, rather than remaining in vain, which rejects any conclusive, teleological, and complete sense of outcomes and the authority of the existing system.⁴ This would be another territory of uncertain multitude.

Fourth, another possible reason behind the audience's discomfort might be Williamson's disability. A certain prejudice against a deaf person could have affected how people valued Williamson's lecture. A person physically or mentally disabled is sometimes demeaned as being not normal. The point I would like to make is that this is something more than a pejorative dichotomy between the disabled and the able. It is a more inclusive and permissive mode of thinking beyond certain intolerant and exclusive perceptions of normativity. It is also about queering "the regime of the normal"⁵ with respect to differences, uncertainty, and deviation.

Perhaps, it is more important for us to discover – paraphrasing Samuel Beckett's famous words – how to fail better again and again.⁶ The capacity and quality of failure should be reconsidered from a different angle. When archival art as a living organism meets failure's "capacity to unravel the certainties of knowledge, competence, representation, normativity, and authority",⁷ it would push the boundaries of its physical and conceptual limit. This investigation, above all, shows the attitude of Sisyphean artists, which tends to dismiss any social consensus

⁴ Emma Cocker, 'Over and Over, Again and Again', in Lisa Le Feuvre (ed.), *Failure*, London: Whitechapel Gallery, Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2010, pp. 154-155.

⁵ Michael Warner (ed.), *Fear of Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, Cultural Politics, Vol. 6, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

⁶ Samuel Beckett, *Worstward Ho*, London: John Calder, 1983, p. 7.

⁷ Roisin O'Gorman and Margaret Werry, 'On Failure (On Pedagogy): Editorial Introduction', in *Performance Research: On Failure*, Vol. 17, No. 1, Feb. 2012, Routledge, p. 1.

and power, reinforced by grand archives and to make a more creative sense of the archival platform on which new connectivity and beginnings are drawn.

3.1. PERFORMING THE ARCHIVE

In general, essential properties of performance and archives are considered to be at odds with each other because performance stands on the basis of one-off presence, while archives guard stable and permanent preservation against disappearing. The postproduction of live performances such as film, photography, and texts cannot guarantee to deliver their whole liveness or the improvisational elements of the site. The archival residues of documenting performances may also be fragmented, deactivated, or misrepresented. Above all, no performance is ever identical to the previous one, although it is repeated based on pre-written scripts. It is, so to speak, repeated as differences each time. With regard to this, Peggy Phelan, in her renowned chapter “The Ontology of Performance”, claims:

Performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations: once it does, it becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology. Performance’s being, [...] becomes itself through disappearance.⁸

For Phelan, the strength of performance lies in its disappearance and its inability to be reproduced. Rebecca Schneider also discusses this antithetical relationship between the ephemerality of live performance and the reproduction of its archival residue. Referring to Phelan’s insights, Schneider wonders if the given logic of archives actually demands the disappearance of performance and continues to question in the following manner: “If we consider performance as of disappearance, of an ephemerality read as vanishment and loss, are we perhaps limiting ourselves to an understanding of performance predetermined by our cultural habituation to the logic of the archive?”⁹ Indeed, the archive in modernity is a political and legislative space where certain normative logic and controlling power can be operated like

⁸ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, London and New York: Routledge, 1993, p. 146.

⁹ Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, London and New York: Routledge, 2011, p. 98.

imperialism, as I have examined earlier. Her question, thus, implies that other means or forms of ruminating events or knowledge produced by performances could be possible, which is unlikely to be containable in the “ocularcentric”¹⁰ archive. Schneider suggests that performance should be approached as “the *act* of remaining and a means of re-appearance and ‘reparticipation’ [original emphasis]”.¹¹ For Schneider, archival remains of performance can be re-enacted and can reappear again and again through repetition of bodily acts, rather than through the demand for visible materiality.¹² With emphasis on the “body-to-body transmission” of performative residues, she critically reminds us that the archive is already built upon the premise of absence and disappearance. Schneider states, “Indeed, [archival] remains become themselves through disappearance as well”.¹³ Her idea sits well with my arguments referring to Derrida in Chapter 2 – i.e. the archive itself already denotes a sense of loss, death, and oblivion of being and memory from the past. In particular, much Sisyphian archival art has demonstrated that the archive can only function as an index of memory and cannot be the past per se; its pathological desire for marked origins is absent. Just as Derrida diagnoses that this archival sickness for finding origins is a doomed hope, Schneider also criticises the logic of archives that is trapped in this ideal myth of all remains marked as the sameness of originals.¹⁴ For her, performance rather “remains differently” than simply disappears.¹⁵ In this regard, Schneider writes:

In this sense performance becomes itself through messy and eruptive re-appearance. It challenges, via the performative trace, any neat antimony between appearance and disappearance, or presence and absence through the basic repetitions that mark performance as indiscreet, non-original, relentlessly citational, and remaining.¹⁶

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 101.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., p. 102 and p. 107. Schneider refers to Diana Taylor’s concept of “repertoire” when explaining repeatable behaviours of bodily acts with the archive. See Diana Taylor, *The Archive and The Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003.

¹³ Schneider, op. cit., p. 100 and p. 102.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 99-100.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 105.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 102.

To put it in another way, the performative readings of archives, memory, and history by means of enactment as repetition and reconstruction (as difference) can challenge the ways in which the past is accessed and historical knowledge is generated. In Schneider's sense that "performance remains differently", I argue that performance uses or activates existing archival residues of visual materiality differently as well. In doing so, the oppositional boundaries between performance and archives can be intertwined. The Sisyphean archival art that I shall introduce utilises or animates a performance's disappearing and re-appearing by virtue of staging failure. The archive then becomes a space of performance activated through repetition and failure, suggesting alternative ways of reconfiguring the habitual operation and visual dominance of archives. Sisyphean artists' performative encounters in and with the realm of archives become a dynamic site of unpredictable new relations and creativity as well as a site of resistance to the fetishistic pursuit of success and perfectionism.

A Polyphonic Resonance of Fallible Attempts

As in the case of Williamson's performance, two works by Kyuchul Ahn (b. 1955) and Ayoung Kim perform ambiguity, fragmentation, struggle, and fallible attempts. Their concern is how historical knowledge is differently performed in a repetitive and fallible manner. Their "doing or performing historiography"¹⁷ in a deliberate yet inevitable collapsing setting becomes itself through failure, as per Phelan's phrase. Unable to be defined either as success or failure, both works forge a discontinuous, undecidable, and unpredictable space of remembering and archiving the past against the representational structure of unity, linearity, and coherency. Their performative approach repetitively brings in archival/anarchival residues from the past and facilitates new relations of the past and the present in the process of appearing and disappearing, deconstructing and reconstructing, and arranging and re-arranging. This discursive act of two works reveals how the contours of social power and memory relating to a certain historical

¹⁷ Ernst van Alphen, *Staging the Archive: Art and Photography in the Age of New Media*, London: Reaktion Books, 2014, p. 257.

event are already mapped through archival remains, but at the same time, how it deconstructs this existing map by suggesting “different ways of accessing history”.¹⁸

Kyuchul Ahn created the work entitled *From Where They Left* (2012) (Fig. 3.1.1) for the 9th Gwangju Biennale. The city of Gwangju has a historically significant meaning for the modern democratic movement in Korea because the “May 18 Democratic Uprising” occurred there in 1980. This was initially a peaceful, pro-democracy movement against the military government but then was brutally suppressed by military forces. Afterwards, there was a sanguinary collision between the armed local civilians and the government, and as a result, hundreds of local people and students were left dead or missing. This historical tragedy and political upheaval still remain quite a strong part of Gwangju’s identity. Ahn attempted to trace and record the city’s unique spirit and history in a participatory and incomplete process. Before the biennale opened, Ahn produced a big painting of a seascape in grey, divided it into two hundred pieces, and scattered the pieces all over the city of Gwangju.¹⁹ In addition, he randomly left ceramic fragments of sculptural work in local letterboxes, streets, and parks. In each piece of the sculpture, the artist’s message was attached, requesting the finders to send it back to the artist whereas nothing was instructed for the fragmented painting; it was simply abandoned. Ahn advertised in newspapers and distributed flyers about his missing artwork, and waited for it to be returned. However, only parts of the work were returned. Ahn put the parts together in the exhibition hall with the missing portions remaining empty. The uncollected pieces are still dispersed somewhere in the city, alluding to the idea of missing and disappearing. This empty and failing scene refers to the victims and missing people of the Democratic Uprising in Gwangju. As fragments of the work are still indifferently left out there, memories and stories of those forgotten, invisible, and unidentified are too fallible to grasp firmly. These unarchived residues are floating around the city, resonating with Gwangju’s remaining wounds up to the present. The failure of having all things returned and the fact that

¹⁸ Schneider, op. cit., p. 98.

¹⁹ Gwangju Biennale Foundation’s website for the Ahn’s work *From Where They Left* (2012), *Roundtable: Gwangju Biennale 2012*, [Online] Available at: http://www.gwangjubiennale.org/www/vieweng/biennale/past_work.asp?idx=62&season-num=past_work.asp%3Fidx=62%26pageNo=1&searchKeyword=0&searchText=ahn, Last accessed 21 November 2016.

not all disappeared fragments in the past are retrieved are staged through Ahn's participatory re-enactment of deconstructing and recreating historical remains. His failed attempt facilitates a type of latent archive of the city's history, which urges the local awakening of its haunting returns today. In Ahn's work, three groups of audiences, i.e. active participants who sent fragmented pieces of the work back to the artist, potential locals who may have come across the mysteriously left artworks in the course of daily life, and third-party viewers who appreciated this work of art, consciously and unconsciously take part in interacting with the historical tragedy of the city. Their ordinary performances that reanimate and re-ruminate on historical leftovers could challenge a political conservatism to define missing people as rioters and recall its repressed memory in a more emancipatory way, even though these are unrecorded and unarchived as visible remains.

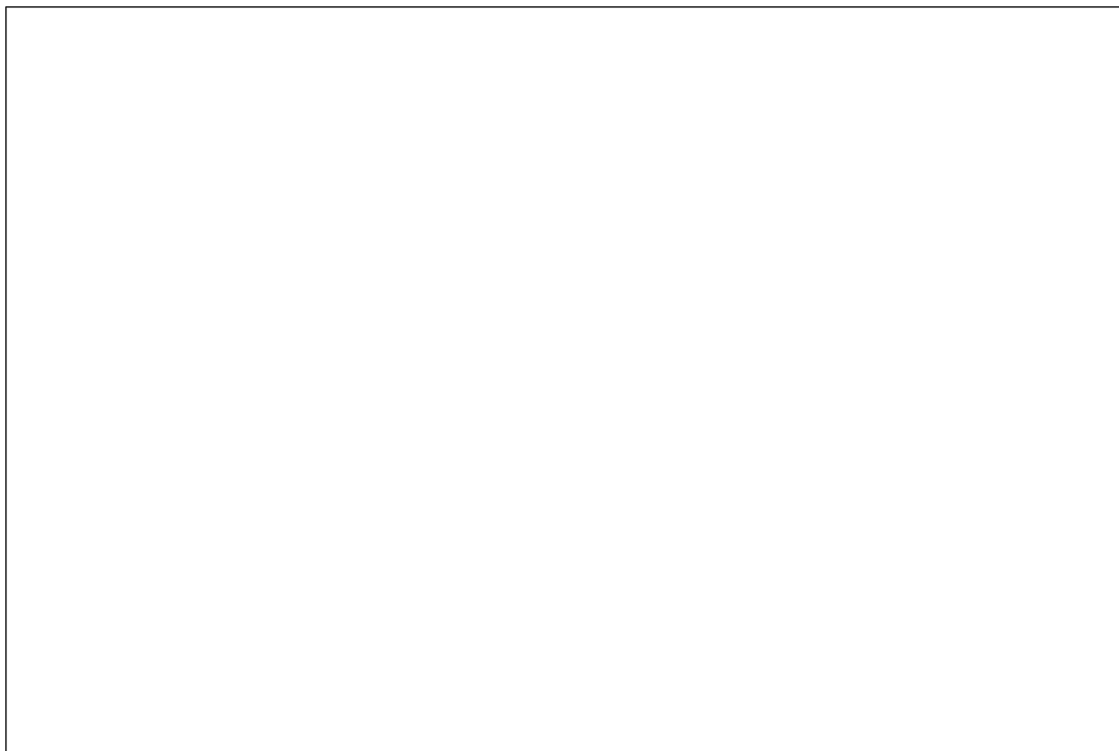


Figure 3.1.1. Ahn Kyuchul, *From Where They Left*, 2012, 9th Gwangju Biennale

Here, staging failure itself can have its own meaning, helping us learn what is lost and what cannot be recollected. Many other Sisyphean archival works have demonstrated that it is

already a fallible project to define the historical archive as a totality or a complete entity. Recalling Foucault's descriptions of history as discontinuity, "new foundations" are repetitively thrown up in history as rupture, break, fragmentation, and transformation.²⁰ In a similar sense, for Ayoung Kim, history is a set of obscure fragments of memories and past events that cannot be fully represented through available remains of archives but is something that should be continually actualised again and again in the present. Kim claims, "The past is in a state of perpetual possibility and thus exists as an information bundle-corpus that anyone can reach out and manipulate".²¹ For Kim, the past is, therefore, not a fixed entity but a transforming constellation that can be repeatedly re-animated by individual performances of different historiographies. The recent works of Kim, whose earlier works have been examined in previous chapters, evolve into a much more extended sense of collecting, layering, and reconstructing, based on an intense and complex process of archival research. However, its ultimate goal seems to be the stage of a fallible and chaotic process of the research outcome itself, i.e. to be scattered, dissipated, and morphed. The work that I shall look at more closely is *Zepheth, Whale Oil from the Hanging Gardens to You, Shell 3* (2015) (Fig. 3.1.2), exhibited at the 56th Venice Biennale in 2015. Kim's previous piece, *PH Express*, which I analysed in section '2.2. Repetition without Origin', reveals ruptures, conflicts, or miscommunication between colonising and colonised histories in the form of re-enacted drama. In the meantime, her *Zepheth* series is expanded from the critique of imperialist representation based on mythical archives and more radically challenges the ways in which residues of historical archives are delivered and communicated on the premise of failure. *Zepheth 3* conducts an experimental musical performance rather than a fictive drama with apprehensible narratives, unfolding more constructive, generative, and inventive stories to be morphed and re-morphed as an infinite birth of "new foundations".

²⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, translated by A.M. Sheridan Smith, London and New York: Routledge, 2002, pp. 5-6.

²¹ Ayoung Kim, 'Zepheth, Whale Oil from the Hanging Gardens to You, Shell 3: Project Summary', 2015, [Online] Available at: <http://ayoungkim.com/wp/works/zepheth-whale-oil-from-the-hanging-gardens-to-you-shell-3>, Last accessed 20 October 2016.



Figure 3.1.2. Ayoung Kim, *Zepheth, Whale Oil from the Hanging Gardens to You, Shell 3*, 2015, 56th Venice Biennale

There are two other versions, *Zepheth 1* and 2, before *Zepheth 3*. These three versions are not only interconnected but also independent projects. They are repeated as differences. What the *Zepheth* series probes is the global and local history of pitch (bitumen) and petroleum and related oil industries in the world. The scope and depth of Kim's archival research on the subject are immense, from the origin and the flow of oil as capital in the twentieth century, through the two oil shocks in the 1970s and their consequent economic impacts on a global scale, through the labour export of Korean construction companies to the Middle East in the 1970s and 1980s, the so-called Middle East Boom, to the modern history of the Middle East that triggered the Gulf War.²² Retracing the macro history of the oil movement, Kim also touches on the personal history of her father, who worked in Kuwait as an employee of a

²² Ayoung Kim, 'Zepheth, Whale Oil from the Hanging Gardens to You, Shell 3: Context', 2015, [Online] Available at: <http://ayoungkim.com/wp/works/zepheth-whale-oil-from-the-hanging-gardens-to-you-shell-3>, Last accessed 22 October 2016.

construction company during that time.²³ The content of the *Zepheth* series is based on the intermingling of these macro and micro histories pertaining to how oil, as key capital, has gone through modern times in different locations. However, the delivery of these complex stories is never straightforward in Kim's works.

Zepheth 3 consists of a 6-channel sound installation and 7 live showcases of voice performance. Kim's research outcome passes through computing algorithms called *Deus ex Machina* (God from the machine), and turns into two different types of libretto. Libretto A, based on stories written by the artist, combines with the score composed by the algorithm, while Libretto B, resulting from the algorithm, is laid upon the score made by the artist.²⁴ In collaboration with Heera Kim, a contemporary music composer, these two librettos are intermittently interpolated into or layered over the course of a musical drama, which is composed of 14 chapters in total. Through the algorithmic process of disassembling and reassembling, what Librettos A and B present is detached from the original content of which the linguistic structure and meanings are dissected and re-aggregated in an arbitrary and repeatable nature. The random sense of the project title, *Zepheth, Whale Oil from the Hanging Gardens to You, Shell*, is also an automatic output from this mechanical process. Kim's unusual application of the syntactic and semantic analysis trials a new linguistic and sonic "corpus" of archival remains, as disparate, illogical, and chaotic. Together with live performances on site, voice recordings of nine dubbing artists, and seven choruses are simultaneously played throughout the narratives.²⁵ The whole performance accordingly resonates with fragments of syllables from recordings and the discontinuity of the performers' dialogues and chanting. Their discordant threads of the oil history become a deconstructive yet constructive web of music, images, and languages. This perpetual process of failing or refusing to anchor at any chronological and conclusive narrative is an integral follow-up to creativity. It rather generates rhythmical ruptures in the historical representation and sparks off a different platform for a

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Hyejin Moon, 'Ayoung Kim: Polyphonic Texture of Sound Montage', *Art in Asia*, May–June, 2015, p. 79

²⁵ Kim, 'Project Summary', op. cit.

more sensorial and intuitive experience in historical archives, which undermines textual and logical comprehension.

More interestingly, performing bodies have fostered Kim's inevitably fallible retrieval of the past as entirety and integrity. The incongruent sequence of voices and overlapping chorus echoing and vibrating into the space enriches the "phonetic texture"²⁶ of the historical narratives. In relation to this, Hyejin Moon points out that the form, as voice, is the essential aspect to understanding Kim's *Zepheth* series: "A fixed text as one meaning becomes a speech as having voice and a dead language begins to take on vitality. Timbre, pitch, the length of a note, tempo, intonation, and the number (solo vs. chorus) enable the possibilities of meaning to be extended to infinity".²⁷ Playing a variation of the performers' voices rhythmically leads and interrupts the entire flow of the play alongside the riff of floating and dissipating in the air. Hence, it can be said that this polyphonic resonance of voices enacts a different mode of historiographies as well as facilitates an infinite expansion of meanings. Kim thus explains her alternative approach to challenging the text-oriented writing of history:

A leap that is only possible in a space where logic and truth are deflected, this is my endeavour in my want to break free of linear writing, and the reason I find joy in the rupture of language. This becomes a disobedient text, a text that is only completed through the audience's reconstitution. Language that is written by humans, or sometimes by machines, passes over the voices of humans to become language or sometimes music, shaking the air and the medium to reach us, quicker than the sight, and more materially than the sight. And it scatters into waves, like stories of the past.²⁸

Kim's statement echoes Schneider's urging that we may need another means of understating the logic and power of authenticity and visibility in archives. The oral and musical form of actualising archival remains could vitalise hidden or latent stories from the past that have not been properly perceived or heard from the existing frame of the archive. Above all, such

²⁶ Hyunjin Kim, 'Ayoung Kim', in Okwui Enwezor (ed.), *All the World's Futures*, La Biennale di Venezia, 56th International Art Exhibition, Exhibition Guide (small version), Venice: Fondazione La Biennale di Venezia, p. 191.

²⁷ Moon, op. cit., pp. 82-83.

²⁸ Ayoung Kim, 'Zepheth, Whale Oil from the Hanging Gardens to You, Shell 3: Closing Remarks', 2015, [Online] Available at: <http://ayoungkim.com/wp/works/zepheth-whale-oil-from-the-hanging-gardens-to-you-shell-3>, Last accessed 24 October 2016.

phonetic performativity of the archival past on the premise of failure keeps producing anarchival, non-linear, and playful texts, encouraging “a multiple and uncanny interruption of the past into the present”.²⁹ In short, Kim proposes that historical knowledge that has been fulfilled by intense archival collection and study fails to be legible and comprehensive. The discontinuous vocal narrations and supplementary information of the wall diagram in the work are inadequate to grasp the histories surrounding the global oil capital as a whole. Kim suggests that staging a fallible attempt would be the most plausible process and outcome of the ways in which the past is projected onto the present. With a constant confusion in the original content, historical narratives delivered through immaterial sound in *Zepheth 3* are repeatedly reconfigured in the present time and space.

Both Ahn and Kim’s strategies of performing the archive tackle dominant images of history and historiography through a repeatable mode of failures. Their performative engagement with archival remains as an expanding frame opens up a new sensorial dimension of historiography that can re-appear and re-participate over and over again. The loop of destruction and creation in the works helps maintain an awareness of the difference between the ordinary past and its representation of the present and functions to reveal a disjunction between personal and public memories. The artists’ individual effort or manner, which intervenes differently with history, cracks the fixed ways in which archival remains are defined, preserved, and represented.

Bodily Gesture of/with Failure and Becoming-Archive

Artists’ relentless archive making and recordkeeping on a daily basis inevitably involves physical actions. The application of a participatory mode to engage with the archives is a means by which bodily experience is more actively brought to the front. The Sisyphean works that I shall discuss here show that artists’ bodily gestures and engagements themselves become archives and archiving. In particular, they are keen on failing moments of archiving and failed

²⁹ Cecilia Aldarondo, ““Only Bone Speaks Memory of Flesh”: Ephemerality and the Archive in Rebecca Schneider’s “Archives: Performance Remains””, in James Elkins et al. (eds.), *Theorizing Visual Studies: Writing Through the Discipline*, New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2013, p. 114.

materials from archives so that the idea of failure unfolds through somewhat ritualistic performances. Their performances are experimented in the twilight zone between function and malfunction, between appearance and disappearance, between traces and non-traces, and between preservation and destruction, which gradually produce “becoming-archive” in a constant flux of doing and undoing archives. This indefinite and transitional condition of performing archives leads us to encounter an invisible and irretraceable area of archives and archiving.

In a quite unusual way, Song Dong radically produces a ritual sense of the personal archive as an everyday performance but without any visible traces. While his other work *Waste Not*, illuminated in section ‘1.3. Anarchival Impulse: Repetition and Failure’, is based on the overwhelming material presence of a paranoid collecting habit, the following performative works display the rather unworldly and spiritual-minded rhythms of the Sisyphian-looped documentation. Song Dong began *Writing a Water Diary* in 1995 (Fig. 3.1.3), where he literally wrote his diary with water on stone.³⁰ Writing this unique diary has become an integral part of his life as a daily ritual, inspired by his father’s lesson to practise his calligraphy on stone with a brush dipped in water. As the water soon evaporates from the stone and all the written characters disappear, no trace is left at all. There is thus no “risk of disclosure”, as in a conventional diary.³¹ Song Dong states:

You might not think about this generally but during the diary writing process consider that someone else might be reading this someday [sic]. Since considering this I stopped writing a traditional diary. [...] After a while this stone slowly became a part of me. That means I could say anything to it and be unscrupulous. This act became a part of life and it made me more relaxed.³²

³⁰ Julie Walsh, ‘Song Dong: The Diary Keeper’, in Suhanya Raffel et al., *APT 2002: Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art 2002*, exhibition catalogue, Queensland Art Gallery (South Brisbane, Australia), 2002, p. 97.

³¹ Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, ‘About artist: Song Dong’, 2002, [Online] Available at: http://www.visualarts.qld.gov.au/content/apt2002_standard.asp?name=APT_Artists_Song_Dong, Last accessed 31 October 2016.

³² From an interview with artist Song Dong by Binghui Huangfu, Director of the Earl Lu Gallery, Lasalle SIA College of the Arts, Singapore, for the catalogue of the exhibition *Shot in the Face*, December 2001, n.p., cited in Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, ‘About artist: Song Dong’, 2002, [Online] Available at:



Figure 3.1.3. Song Dong, *Writing a Water Diary*, 1995

From the conventional viewpoint of general archiving practices, his water-based archive is a failure in terms of documentation since nothing is materially left for the future. In other words, this seemingly meaningless gesture can be regarded as malfunction, as far as keeping a diary for preservation and remembrance is concerned. Nevertheless, his failing diary is a type of defence against the danger of the private archive, which is always at risk of exposure. The failing fate of Song Dong's diary guarantees a more emancipatory, unselfconscious, and permissive sense of meditating one's daily routine and emotional leftovers. It is also a performative reaction, reminding us of the ephemeral nature of memories that slip away from the hope of leaving a complete and solid record. He continues to write and fail in order to re-write again but performs with an empty surface of the stone emerging anew. The fact that nothing visibly remains does not mean failure. Instead, the artist's action of documenting disappearance itself becomes performative archiving on the premise of failure to inscribe and

http://www.visualarts.qld.gov.au/content/apt2002_standard.asp?name=APT_Artists_Song_Dong, Last accessed 31 October 2016.

actualise the physical and psychological process of remembering and recording without necessarily leaving any material behind.

The processual moment of Song Dong's water writing is more dramatised when it meets with the subject of time. His failing yet creative writing was performed for an hour in Times Square in New York in *Writing Time with Water* (2005) (Fig. 3.1.4), a part of his ongoing water-writing series. In this case, his private ritual of archiving was exposed in a public space. In the centre of the most hectic city, New York, the artist literally wrote the time onto the concrete surface of the square using water and a traditional calligraphy brush, again and again.³³ The written times existed for a while but soon vanished into the air. Ritualising the repetitive process of consumption and the disappearance of time, the artist generated an artistically alternative method of recordkeeping based on the fallible and transient aspect of archiving. His performance of water writing paradoxically signals the act of documenting slipped through in the actuality of enactment, opposing an image/text record-obsessed culture. There is an underlying sense of recurrent failures, not to remember the performance itself but to recognise the constantly changing state of the archival materiality and concept: the becoming-archive. This may be described as a successful failure to carry out the archival dualities of preservation and disappearance. More precisely, the performance itself is not a failure but is premised on failure.³⁴ It is interesting to compare On Kawara's *One Million Years* series, studied in section '2.1. Repetition as Accumulation' with Song Dong's water writing. Kawara endeavours to portray the immensurable passage of time by making thick volumes of endless numbers and pages written and accumulated in a bureaucratic form as visible remains. In contrast, Song Dong stages the invisible and immaterial flow of temporality through the actuality and presentness of his bodily archiving. The moment when the artist's bodily gesture of failure is performed here and now has more to do with disappearance and ephemerality than

³³ Walsh, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

³⁴ Cormac Power, 'Performing to Fail: Perspectives on Failure in Performance and Philosophy', in Daniel Meyer-Dinkgraffe and Daniel Watt (eds.), *Ethical Encounters: Boundaries of Theatre, Performance and Philosophy*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010, p. 131.

with materiality and permanence. Above all, the artist's body and actions are the major medium of, or the transitional platform for, the archiving process.



Figure 3.1.4. Song Dong, *Writing Time with Water*, 1995/2000

Intriguingly, Schneider speaks of “an archive of the flesh”, likening the archive and performance to bone and flesh: “In the archive, flesh is given to be that which slips away. According to archive logic, flesh can house no memory of bone. In the archive, only bone speaks memory of flesh. Flesh is [a] blind spot”.³⁵ In short, the bone of the archive is remaining while the flesh of performance is disappearing. What Schneider particularly emphasises is this blind spot of the flesh that does not disappear but can reappear in a repetitive way in the form of performing archives. Even if flesh is not “houseable” within the phallogentric and ocularcentric archive, it does not mean that it is non-existent or lost.³⁶ This idea brings us back to Derrida’s claims that the archive takes place in the form of “domiciliation” or “house arrest”

³⁵ Schneider, op. cit., p. 100.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 101.

and that there is a certain law, order, or political power operating the archive.³⁷ However, he simultaneously observes that the archive also takes places “at the place of originary and structural breakdown of the said memory”.³⁸ As discussed earlier, this contradictory feature of the archive, which slips away from its original aim to securely preserve the past in the archontic house, raises the question of what the archive is meant to seek for. Derrida asserts that the archive is more concerned with the upcoming potential of the future rather than of the past.³⁹ The archive then becomes both a closed shelter for the past and an open page for future memory. If I apply Derrida’s argument to Schneider’s metaphor of the bone and flesh of the archive, the bone of the archive would be a consigned power and logic that maintains the housed memory and its flesh would be the “breakdown” or “blind spot” that slips away from the archival nomination of the past. Again, in Schneider’s account, the invisible and deferred memory from the archive as flesh can be recognised and re-enacted through bodily acts of repetition. In a similar line of thought, I highlight that the body can be turned into the archive in flux or archiving in transition through the repetitive and fallible enactment of the actual performative process. Such performing “the archive of the flesh” produces multiple recursions of futuristic narratives and memories yet to come as infinite creativity.

The following work of Barbara Steveni (b. 1928) is within the framework of performance that can be read as “the archive of the flesh”. Steveni is a co-founder of the Artist Placement Group (APG, later renamed O+I), whose members included John Latham, Ian Breakwell, Barry Flanagan, David Hall, Ian McDonald Munro, Anna Ridley, Jeffrey Shaw, among others.⁴⁰ APG refigured the role of the artist in a wider social context, contributing to conceptual art as a “socially engaged practice” during the 1960s and 1970s in the UK. The Tate Archive acquired its rich archive in 2004.⁴¹ Before the APG archive was officially handed over to Tate, Steveni and her assistants undertook the pre-cataloguing process. During this

³⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, translated by Eric Prenowitz, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998, pp. 1-2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴⁰ Tate Archive, ‘APG: Artist Placement Group – Overview and A-Z of People’, [Online] Available at: <http://www2.tate.org.uk/artistplacementgroup/>, Last accessed 3 November 2016.

⁴¹ Victoria Lane, ‘An Interview with Barbara Steveni’, in Judy Vaknin et al. (eds.), *All This Stuff: Archiving the Artist*, Oxfordshire: Libri Publishing, 2013, p. 65.

exhausting and laborious process, Steveni started to think about herself as a more living archive than the stacks of remaining materials in front of her eyes. In her own words: “I gradually found myself talking about the archive. [...] I found myself telling these stories and realised I was a kind of database of memories and knowledge about the documents I was reading and looking at”.⁴² Steveni might have intuitively realised that texts, images, and objects related to APG’s activities were insufficient and fatally fallible in embodying the APG’s actual traces of the past in total and that there must be something missing. Therefore, she decided to become the APG archive herself by performing the documentary and participatory walk series *I Am An Archive* (2004–2010), which was held in different locations of the UK and Germany during this period. Steveni’s performance series emerged out of the necessity of a more active and immediate way to prevent the archive from becoming static and constrained.

In the walk series, Steveni revisited the multiple places where the original APG events took place, and had conversations and held discussions about the APG’s history with other participating artists and students. Even though her journey traced all the way back to the locations and places where the events had happened, in the course of each performance, the contexts and meanings of the moving APG archive became newly defined and particularly regenerated through mutual memories and anecdotal exchanges between participating walkers. This participatory spectatorship as “spontaneous group storytelling, interviewing, filming and recording”⁴³ is another essential agent to revive archival remains differently, through which the APG archive is to be a transitional passage of arranging and rearranging past, present, and future time and memory. In other words, the historical and geographical revisiting of APG’s legacy is an alternative effort to make slipped and ruptured archival memory appear and reappear over and over again. I assume that the potential communication failure between participants would also allow some room for other creative interpretations about the APG. Steveni recalls the walk series as follows:

⁴² Ibid., p. 67.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 70.

It was being in the two places, the past and present. It is really odd walking around London, being in my body, with my total age span, knowing that the world is the way it is now. It's very strange being in my body, being held by this husk of my body, and [...] the thing that gets me going again is when I'm telling the story and where there's a reciprocal interest in receiving it.⁴⁴

Steveni's walks re-wrote APG history by tracing back to the invisible and latent past and re-animating the bodily memory and experience in the present moment at the same time. This becoming archive is not facilitated by a single attempt but by repeatable performances so that the flesh as a blind spot of the archive can continuously rise to the surface. Then, it repeatedly moves forward towards the future with manifold possibilities of new stories.

Steveni's bodily gesture can also be seen as a resistant response to institutional archiving in which the course of selecting and discarding things is regularly undergone. She performed one of her walk series with the old files of the APG Archive that Tate decided to throw away and not preserve, i.e. the abandoned documents that were treated as failures. These failing materials from the Tate Archive were retreated and revalued by the artist's performance. Steveni read out these materials, destroyed them, and planted them for future growing.⁴⁵ Planting after destruction implies that there must be upcoming events or narratives as potential creativity. Anthony Hudek and Alex Sainsbury, who curated the exhibition, *The APG Approach* (2012) at Raven Row gallery, argue that:

I Am An Archive acts as an antidote to the risk of APG becoming a historical marker stored away in institutional and private archives. By recollecting the disparate fragments of APG's often conflicting and conflictual histories, Steveni's videos perform the challenge of any witness, which is to protect a legacy while opening it up to new interpretations.⁴⁶

Embracing disregarded remains, Steveni built up a differentiated form of the artistic archive from institutional archives. Her performance can be seen as a more permissive and inclusive

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 73.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 69.

⁴⁶ Anthony Hudek and Alex Sainsbury, 'Introduction', exhibition titled as *The Individual and the Organisation: Artist Placement Group 1966–79* (27 September to 16 December 2012), [Online] Available at: <http://www.ravenrow.org/texts/40/>, Last accessed 31 October 2016.

way of treating archival remains, which promotes more imaginative and inspiring interpretations about the history of APG, dematerialised and transmitted through bodies. In fact, *I Am An Archive* is in line with what APG pursued as a key value, which is “dematerialisation of the art object”.⁴⁷ The conceptual basis of APG is artists as social professionals who engage in a non-art environment such as governmental offices and industrial enterprises. APG’s artists, who conducted placements in various social sectors, were free from the duty of making art objects as outcome and were paid for idea development for certain projects. Their labour itself was credited as proper artistic and industrial values. They sought legitimation not from the art institutions but from wider social contexts by “bringing into rhythm the differential speeds of spectatorship, contemplation, self-expression and production, and pursuing the resultant activities without seeking their artistic legitimation”.⁴⁸ In this regard, I suppose that Steveni’s *I Am An Archive* is another socially engaged practice encouraging a participatory spectatorship, which ultimately dematerialises archival materials and the act of archiving itself so that it transforms the role and function of archival institutions into the mutual and performative process of social research or socially engaged practice.

Nevertheless, it is interesting that her second performance, a walk around Westminster and Millbank areas, paradoxically ended at the Tate Archive where the official APG Archive is preserved. Adrian Glew, a Tate archivist, named this end venue “APG World” and displayed the archival contents and objects of APG.⁴⁹ Returning to the conventional place of the archive suggests that the bone and flesh of the archive are not confrontational but interrelated as a fluid chain of intercommunication, reciprocal encounters, and ceaseless enactments between them. Whenever the walking performance was conducted, the whole process was recorded as films and images. I assume that some selected documentations of it would be stored in the archive again as part of APG’s practices. This repetitive action of appearing, disappearing, and reappearing is a perpetual cycle of archiving and performing historical remains. According to

⁴⁷ Howard Slater, ‘The Art of Gove: The Artist Placement Group 1966–1989’, *Variant*, Vol. 2, No. 11, Summer 2000, p. 23.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁴⁹ Lane, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

Simone Osthoff, artists' living archives challenge the presupposed notions of stable, chronological, and retroactive history.⁵⁰ Steveni's *I Am An Archive* as "the archive of the flesh" includes "the body of participants, theory and history"⁵¹ and its methodology bears "the increasingly fluid relations between artists' works, writings, and archives".⁵² In this sense, Sisyphean artists' participatory approaches and literal performances of the archive erode the archival boundaries between inside and outside, researcher and archivist, performer and audience, and past and contemporaneity.

Both performances of Song Dong and Barbara Steveni are kinds of incarnations of the bodily archive blurring the borders of being successful and fallible, materialised and dematerialised, and constructive and deconstructive. Their becoming archives are experimental zones where archival remains are done and undone in a state of flux, and accordingly, prospective narratives and interactive interpretations are repeatedly generated as challenging the risk of the archive being fossilised and stagnated.

Performing Failure as Purposeless Labour and Futile Process

The artist Kyuchul Ahn, whom I mentioned above, describes his particular attitude towards the idea of failure:

Rather, they are merely repeatedly carrying out the work that each object has been given, following from the acceptance of (and enduring) the conditions that come with each object according to its position. [...] Then, what are these objects here to show us? What kind of work are they doing? [...] I would respond with the following: work that renders zero results, work in vain, aimless repetition, failure to realise goals, accepting our failures, learning how to accept our failures, making failure itself into a goal...and unabashedly bringing out the plain shape of the labour and time that went into that process of failure.⁵³

⁵⁰ Simone Osthoff, *Performing the Archive: The Transformation of the Archive in Contemporary Art from Repository of Documents to Art Medium*, New York: Atropos Press, 2009, p. 12.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 12.

⁵² Ibid., p. 13.

⁵³ Kyuchul Ahn, 'Kyuchul Ahn: All and But Nothing', *Neolook*, Vol. 20140829g, 2014, n.p., [Online] Available at: <https://neolook.com/archives/20140829g>, Last accessed 4 November, 2016.

In general, failure is negatively judged against the value of success. When it is said that something is successful, it is evaluated on typical assumptions of success such as fulfilled perfection, progressive development, mastery achievement, accuracy, and satisfaction. However, like Ahn's approach, with some Sisyphean artists, the way of working completely betrays these stereotypical and incompatible ideas about success and failure. They often abandon the goals of completeness, efficiency, and productivity and rather plainly stage a series of non-productive, futile, and aimless events or actions in their performative works. Performing failure in a purposeless and meaningless sense seems to address both resistance to the obsessive pursuit of success and recognition of another facet of failure as a form of art. In this regard, Lisa Le Feuvre asserts, "In art, failure can also be a component of speculative experiment, which arrives at something unrecognisable as art according to the current criteria of knowledge or judgement".⁵⁴ Frequently regarded as time-based art or process art, the art of failure that I shall elaborate below is explicitly interested in documenting the incessant process of aimless labour and time itself. In this exhausting and wrestling course of repetition and failure, a certain judgement about the situation, whether it is success or failure, is suspended and its optimistic promise of fulfilment is constantly frustrated. Does this procrastinating or durational condition of being failure have other possibilities than mere futility? This question should be considered in a revised category of knowledge and judgement, as Le Feuvre points out above. Challenging the negative prejudice about failure and the fear of failure, a positive and critical dimension of such a type of Sisyphean archival art can be discussed. Above all, the study of the time- and process-based art of failure pushes any limitations of thinking and knowing by navigating the realm of uncertainty and doubt.

Many works of Francis Alÿs (b. 1959) involve the seemingly pointless endeavour of carrying out an intense bodily labour.⁵⁵ For instance, one of his best known works, *Paradox of Praxis (Sometimes Doing Something Leads to Nothing)* (1997), documents the artist's simple and tenacious action in pushing a massive block of ice along Mexico City's streets for nine

⁵⁴ Lisa Le Feuvre, 'Introduction: Strive to Fail', in Lisa Le Feuvre (ed.), *Failure*, London: Whitechapel Gallery, Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2010, p. 19.

⁵⁵ See Francis Alÿs' official website: francisalys.com for his works and videos.

hours until it completely melted and disappeared. In his animation *Song for Lupita (Mañana)* (1998), a singing woman pours water from one cup to another in a ceaseless loop. The half-hour long film *Rehearsal I (El Ensayo)* (1999–2001) features a Volkswagen Beetle repeatedly attempting to drive up to the top of an unpaved hill in Tijuana but failing over and over again. In *When Faith Moves Mountains* (2002) (Fig. 3.1.5), the artist collaborates with 500 volunteers standing in a row in order to move a huge sand dune a few centimetres away in Lima by hand shovelling. All these works consist of cyclical repetition and the failure to perform a particular action, which produces almost zero results. What the artist records is the pure labour and time that the performed action took. Alÿs' ways of working are often interpreted as critical comments on the social, economic, and political conditions of cities in Latin America including Mexico City where Belgian-born Alÿs has been based since the 1990s. The motto that Alÿs basically employs in his works is "maximum effort, minimum results", reversing the modern economic principle of "minimum effort, maximum results" that emphasises efficiency and productivity.⁵⁶ The work embodies Alÿs' observation that the labouring efforts of local people in Latin countries are likely to be frustrated and unlikely to bring any improvements to their living conditions. Alluding to the failure of realising the promise of an economic value-oriented society, "non-productive, wasted, non-historical, excessive time – a suspended time" is documented in the works of Alÿs.⁵⁷ This is a rather cyclical, halting, and non-linear flow of time. Alÿs seems to suggest that performing wasted and excessive time in a repetitive manner is the only way to break off the modern doctrine of linear progression from which a rupture in the continuity of time and everyday life can be initiated.

⁵⁶ Klaus Biesenbach et al. (eds.), *Francis Alÿs: A Story of Deception*, exhibition catalogue London: Tate Publishing, 2010, p. 127.

⁵⁷ Boris Groys, 'Comrades of Time', *e-flux*, Journal 11, December 2009, p. 6.



Figure 3.1.5. Francis Alÿs, *When Faith Moves Mountains*, 2002, Lima

This rupture could make room for other possibilities still to come. According to Russell Ferguson, such “a durational element” is continually featured in Alÿs’ works such that the moment of conclusion or closure is being suspended and revisited again and again.⁵⁸ Ferguson defines the key feature of Alÿs’ works as this constant state of rehearsal in which things are always revised and recalibrated with the possibility of changes to come.⁵⁹ Each work in rehearsal continually brings another rehearsal of the work, which always leaves room for further iterations, alterations, and creations. In other words, the delayed moment of finalisation cracks the linear process (or progress) of the event and repeatedly makes ruptures for possibly perpetual revisions and creations. The seemingly futile process of repetition and failure that Alÿs performs should be reconsidered as a new critical form of judging and acknowledging because it, in fact, opens the door to future creativity with these continual differences rather

⁵⁸ Russell Ferguson, ‘Politics of Rehearsal: Francis Alÿs’, 2007, in Lisa Le Feuvre (ed.), *Failure*, London: Whitechapel Gallery, Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2010, p. 195.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

than the retrospective, retroactive iteration of sameness. Then, to what extent is performing failure potential and imaginary? Would it be possible to get a glimpse of any hope for the future in failure? Alÿs' other famous work, *The Green Line (Sometimes Doing Something Poetic Can Become Political and Sometimes Doing Something Political Can Become Poetic)* (2004) (Fig. 3.1.6), may offer part of the answer to those questions.

For this work, Alÿs walked through the municipality of Jerusalem for two days, carrying dripping green paint that marked the ground. His walking followed the armistice border between Israel and Jordan known as the Green Line, which was created by Moshe Dayan for the temporary ceasefire of 1948, but the border lost its validity after the Six Day War of 1967.⁶⁰ Since then, Israel has occupied Palestinian territories, the east side of the line (the West Bank side), which still causes acute territorial and political conflict between Israel and Palestine. In revisiting this symbolic boundary of the original Green Line, Alÿs documented his bodily and laborious journey, through which he left a trace of his feeble yet persistent action of individual mapping. Before *The Green Line* piece, Alÿs tried his act of mapping on the urban surface in *The Leak* (1995). For this less politically charged performance in São Paulo, his walking began from the gallery, moved around the city, and returned to the gallery with trailing paints. In both cases of mapping, Alÿs carried out a performative act of recording the seemingly marginal and absurd task that does not produce immediate meaning. Nevertheless, his artistic and socio-political intervention with the contested reality underlines new perspectives on the artist's bodily gesture performing a Sisyphean task as a critical tool and the physical and conceptual idea of the border in the case of *The Green Line*.

Alÿs' *The Green Line* recreates his own map through zigzagging walks to avoid the security checkpoints and to stop by the historic route along the rough green line.⁶¹ With his body in perpetual motion, this thinly drawn line becomes a visual metaphor for a long-pending history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The more important point here is that the artist makes his walking trajectory with dripping paint that leaves a trail of clear marks on the surface first

⁶⁰ Mark Godfrey, 'Politics/Poetics: The Work of Francis Alÿs', in Biesenbach et al. (eds.), op. cit., 2010, p. 22.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 24.

but gradually dissolves with time. The paint is, so to speak, a shifting material of appearing and disappearing. Furthermore, it can reappear with future performances transmitted by the artist's bodily gesture again and again. This implies that the moving body in space and time marks out a flexible line in and out of visibility, not as an already given and permanently fixed border on the map but as a performative mapping in flux. Laymert Garcia dos Santos suggests that Alÿs' continuous line "marks and remarks *simultaneously*, inscribing the constitutive trait that establishes the artist's body and mind in its attunement to and resonance with the environment [original emphasis]".⁶² In doing so, the concept of territory is transformed into a contingent surface in the duration of walking so that Alÿs' remapping and recomposing could have a capacity for embracing route alterations and variations in response to the circumstantial context of the city where he walks.

In this sense, the idea of rehearsing constant revision and reconfiguration in Alÿs' works is applied here again. Alÿs does not aim to remind people of the original armistice line or to suggest another justifiable borderline through this performance. Instead, he seems to be hoping that his green line is a fluid border in a transitional state that challenges the already given political hegemony and antagonism and considers a more tolerant way to deal with conflictual relationships between different ethnic communities and socio-political groups. Together with the scene of the artist's paint mapping, *The Green Line* includes interview clips in which a range of pundits from Israel and Palestine as well as European activists, historians, and journalists state their own political opinions on and appreciations of Alÿs' action and related issues. Obviously, they all have different viewpoints and positions. Thus, the work, as both art and documentation, becomes "a kind of arena for discussion and dissension"⁶³ by archiving confrontational and diverse responses to these complex issues of territorial dispute and ethnic division.

It is also an attempt to consider the borderline in a three-dimensional manner, escaping from the linear logic of line on the paper map and seeking new resolutions for mapping as

⁶² Laymert Garcia dos Santos, 'Becoming Other to Be Oneself: Francis Alÿs Inside the Borderline', in Biesenbach et al. (eds.), op. cit., p. 189.

⁶³ Godfrey, op. cit., 2010, p. 24.

change, diversity, and coexistence. Alÿs himself raises questions about his performative mapping as critical awareness: Can an artistic intervention truly bring about an unforeseen way of thinking, or is it more a matter of creating a sensation of “meaninglessness” that shows the absurdity of the situation? Can an absurd act provoke a transgression that makes you abandon the standard assumptions on the sources of conflict? Can those kinds of artistic acts bring about the possibility of change?⁶⁴ Alÿs has partly resolved his questions by categorising his politically engaged action as a poetic practice. The subheading of *The Green Line* tells more: *Sometimes Doing Something Poetic Can Become Political and Sometimes Doing Something Political Can Become Poetic*. The artist’s walking and mapping in this work is the very medium of both politics and poetics for investigating their “contingent, contextual and historical” relationships.⁶⁵ Alÿs’ political intervention and poetic acts penetrate into each other’s realms through which a zone of uncertainty and doubt emerges. To put it other words, Alÿs’ gesture of liquid mapping constantly displaces the existing order of borderline and suspends the moment of conceptual affirmation and physical separation of bordering so that nothing is certain and determinate in the middle of the action. Even though his individual practice of processual and time-consuming performance would not affect the existing separation barrier in actuality, it does not remain in vain, but its equivocal and uncertain capability ultimately questions the over-determined power of political geography and any related ideological certainties. Above all, Alÿs’ artistic intervention, being political and poetic at the same time, allows a more empathic imagination and a more tolerant attitude for possible changes and potential coexistence beyond borders. Hence, making the green line in between politics and poetics is not meaningless absurdity but a hopeful creation for future politics yet to come as well as resistance to the given logic of spatial politics and conflicts.

⁶⁴ Francis Alÿs, *Sometimes Doing Something Poetic Can Become Political and Sometimes Doing Something Political Can Become Poetic*, exhibition catalogue, New York: David Zwirner Gallery, 2007, n.p.

⁶⁵ Biesenbach et al. (eds.), op. cit., p. 143.



Figure 3.1.6. Francis Alÿs, *The Green Line (Sometimes Doing Something Poetic Can Become Political and Sometimes Doing Something Political Can Become Poetic)*, 2004, Jerusalem

The varied aspects of performing failure have been examined so far. Sisyphean artists' task of repetition and failure in the realm of performance has evoked corporal engagement with archives and archiving. Their singing, talking, acting, and walking deconstruct a habitual mode of archival reading and writing that is largely dependent on visual materials and, at the same time, create a new sensorial dimension to have a different access to the archival past as an expanding critical frame. The fallible attempt in Sisyphean archival works fostered by performing bodies reveals the inherently impossible retrieval of the past as entirety and integrity and instead actualises the deliberate discontinuity of historical narratives and contextual meanings. In doing so, the fragmented and discordant remains of the archive fully resonate with polyphonic creativity, which is regarded as an alternative historiography that can re-appear and re-participate over and over again through the performative approach. In addition, the artists' bodily gestures on the premise of failure often bring in a more active sense of dematerialisation of the archive and participatory spectatorship in the course of archiving. Their becoming-archives experiment with the in-between zone that blurs the archival border between function and malfunction and between preservation and disappearance, preventing archives from becoming passive and fossilised. Another type of staging failure in art that I have explored is documenting the temporal flow of the purposeless labour and futile process itself in a repetitive manner. This seemingly meaningless, absurd, and unproductive act of recording can suggest new perspectives on the existing criteria of knowledge and value assessment: failure is not merely the oppositional concept of success but can be a reflective, speculative, playful, rebellious, transgressive, political, poetic, and tolerant mode of thinking and performing. In other words, the failing moment of Sisyphean archival arts produces a space of protest and reconfiguration, a space of uncertainty and doubt, and a space of opportunity and creation, not aspiring to the fetishistic pursuit of success and perfectionism and not desiring finitude and fulfilment.

In a similar line of thought, the following section will investigate how queering the archives contributes to dislocation or subversion of any normative logic and reality through

which something extraordinary, deviant, or unusual (defined typically as failure) can be reconsidered and revalued in its own right.

3.2. QUEERING THE ARCHIVE

The last point I observed from Williamson's performance is that people's prejudice against disability is likely to result in a negative judgment of a person or situation, giving the performance a more uncomfortable and precarious mood because what is deemed socially acceptable has already been internalised within ourselves as a certain biased norm.

Foucault defines disciplinary power as a technique of modern societies that produces, regulates, and examines social norms. He writes that "disciplines will define not a code of law, but a code of normalisation".⁶⁶ Such normalisation through disciplines establishes social standards to categorise what is acceptable or unacceptable and is, above all, pervasively operated as a form of social control and governance in various systems of governmental administration, education, and medical practices. Foucault elucidated this idea of disciplinary power in *Discipline and Punish* in 1975 and later developed it into the concept of a biopower that manages and regulates modern bodies and sexual identity in *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1* in 1976.⁶⁷ For Foucault, the new science of sexuality – sexology in the late nineteenth century – is also closely associated with the modern power structure, which scientifically defines and examines perverted sexualities such as the sexuality of children and homosexuality as "contrary to nature" and "against the law".⁶⁸ This modern mechanism of normalising sex is managed through total supervision and official documentation. The systematic categorisation, wherein individuals are labelled as being normal and abnormal, eliminates the threat of "perverts". Foucault questions such uncritical acceptance of particular norms through disciplinary power and rejects this potentially oppressive concept of sexuality.⁶⁹ He suggests how we could escape from disciplinary forms of knowledge and power: "Truth to tell, if we are to struggle against

⁶⁶ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College De France, 1975-1976*, translated by David Macey, New York: Picador, 2003, p. 38.

⁶⁷ See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan, New York: Vintage Books, 1995 and *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1: The Will to Knowledge*, translated by Robert Hurley, London: Penguin Books, 1990a. There are two more volumes. See *The History of Sexuality Vol. 2: The Use of Pleasure*, translated by Robert Hurley, London: Penguin Books, 1992 and *The History of Sexuality Vol. 3: The Care of the Self*, translated by Robert Hurley, London: Penguin Books, 1990b.

⁶⁸ Foucault, op. cit., 1990a, pp. 38-39.

⁶⁹ Foucault, op. cit., 1990a, pp. 8-9.

disciplines, or rather against disciplinary power, in our search for nondisciplinary power, we should not be turning to the old right of sovereignty; we should be looking to a new right that is both anti-disciplinary and emancipated from the principle of sovereignty.”⁷⁰

From a Foucauldian perspective, queer archival art turns down any confines of unquestioned disciplines and knowledge against regulated norms and gender conformity. It seeks practices of freedom that suggest an alternative model of confronting, failing, detouring, and imagining. It is quite surprising to realise that there are no queer archival questions of gender and sexuality in Hal Foster’s analysis of contemporary archival art.⁷¹ The desire of queer archival artists to preserve and archive their own memory, experience, feelings, and history that deviate from the mainstream culture and historical narratives is a distinctive part of contemporary archival and anarchival impulses. I argue that these artists can also be seen as Sisyphean archival artists who run archival/anarchival performativity. Their differing aesthetic standards break the impasse of binary formulations of normality and abnormality, of success and failure. In queer archival practices, failure is not the oppositional notion of success but a repetitive, persistent, reflective, reparative, and nonconforming mode to archive and anarchieve queer life, desire, and history. According to Judith Halberstam, for queers, failure can be a style to think about the ways of being, doing, and knowing beyond conventional understandings of success in a heteronormative and capitalistic society.⁷² She goes on to argue that the queer art of failure opens up other possible perspectives of ordering and disordering the logic of success and failure, which ultimately leads to “unregulated territories” where “more undisciplined knowledge, more questions and fewer answers” can emerge.⁷³

Hence, queer or queering can have a dual meaning in my arguments. First, non-heterosexuals have reclaimed the term queer to describe themselves in a self-affirming sense although it was originally a derogatory word to describe homosexuals. It later became to be an umbrella term for sexual and gender minorities, and has now increasingly been reappropriated

⁷⁰ Foucault, op. cit., 2003, p. 40.

⁷¹ Mathias Danbolt, ‘Touching History: Archival Relations in Queer Art and Theory’, in Mathias Danbolt et al. (eds.), *Lost and Found: Queering the Archive*, Nikolaj, Copenhagen Contemporary Art Centre, 2009, p. 31.

⁷² Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, London: Duke University Press, 2011, pp. 2-3.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

to indicate an unconventional and non-normative approach. Therefore, in the thesis, queer means a performative approach to disrupt or transform the routinised conception and language of gender, sexuality, time, and history embedded in heteronormative archives.⁷⁴ Second, queering is thus a critical strategy, view or way of doing and undoing, to destabilise any naturalised norms and dichotomous boundaries of mainstream culture and history in general. Accordingly, I shall look at queer archival/anarchival projects that continually deconstruct any mastery and authoritative sense of logic in normative archives and reconstruct their own ways of archiving the non-normative past, visualising and pulling out hidden stories from the archival shelves or even from not yet recognised, assembled records. In doing so, underground routes to queer memories and histories of both collectives and individuals that have been repressed and unspoken can be brought to the surface and dynamically communicated in public. In this regard, Halberstam claims that:

The archive is not simply a repository; it is also a theory of cultural relevance, a construction of collective memory, and a complex record of queer activity. In order for the archive to function it requires users, interpreters and cultural historians to wade through the material and piece together the jigsaw puzzle of queer history in the making.⁷⁵

Queer alternative languages engaging with archives embody indeterminate characteristics of sexuality and reveal the continual pushing and troubling of heteronormative frames in the making. I particularly remark that Sisyphean queer archives seek repetitive accumulation as an incomplete and “floating signifier for the kinds of lives”⁷⁶ and perform repetitive creations

⁷⁴ In feminist theorising and conception, the formulation of gender identity is performative, i.e. gender as something you do, not something you are. Judith Butler refuses fixed gender and sexual identities and argues that gender roles are imposed by the ideology of heteronormativity, as gender identity is not something stable and coherent but “a stylised repetition of acts”, Butler continues, “If gender is instituted through acts which are internally discontinuous, then the *appearance of substance* is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief”. (See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York: Routledge, 1999, p.392.) Butler’s performativity of gender opens up the possibility to think of queer as *unbecoming*, which is “to liberate the self from any *proper* end that would govern its [teleological] becoming”. In short, this is the view that liberates queers from the illusions of a given nature or normality. See Claire Colebrook, ‘Queer Aesthetics’, in E. L. McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen (eds.), *Queer Times, Queer Becomings*, New York: State University of New York Press, 2011, p. 31.

⁷⁵ Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Space: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, New York and London: New York University Press, 2005, pp. 169-170.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

without determining normative origins and prescriptive grammar. Frequently challenging “a heteronormative ideology of *straight time*”⁷⁷ in terms of chronology, linearity, and progression, Sisyphian archives of queer life and culture are keener on different ways of collaborative narratives, tactile conversation, and relational emotions than on material visibility and provenance only. In relation to this, Ann Cvetkovich argues that “queer archives can be viewed as the material instantiation of Derrida’s deconstructed archive; they are composed of material practices that challenge traditional conceptions of history and understand the quest for history as a psychic need rather than a science”.⁷⁸ Queering any concepts or conditions that have been stabilised and neutralised for long necessarily entails subversive, deconstructive, and transgressive acts or processes. Accordingly, queering the archive here will map this queer deconstructive and reconstructive process of archival/anarchival performativity, creating affective connections and dialogues with archives across time and space.

Collecting Other Histories and Feelings as Marginal

A general distrust of public archival institutions is frequently featured in many works of queer studies and queer archival art. The early pioneers of gay and lesbian studies established in the 1970s had to confront the deliberate concealment and destruction of certain homosexual-related records in institutional archives. For instance, Graeme Reid, who studied the Gay and Lesbian Archives of South Africa, points out the case of an Anglican Priest, Canon C. T. Wood. As an amateur archivist, Wood collected substantial materials in church history in both South Africa and overseas covering a wide range of social and political topics, which were officially handed over to the University of the Witwatersrand in 1980.⁷⁹ However, Reid found that some letters and photographs containing coded gay subtext were intentionally destroyed by library archivists and an unrequested embargo for some materials has been placed in the name of

⁷⁷ Mathias Danbolt, ‘The Trouble with Straight Time: Disruptive Anachronisms in Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz’s N.O. Body’, in Gundhild Borggreen and Rune Gade (eds.), *Performing Archives/Archives of Performance*, Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2013, p. 458.

⁷⁸ Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality and Lesbian Public Cultures*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2003, p. 268.

⁷⁹ Graeme Reid, ‘“The History of the Past is the Trust of the Present”: Preservation and Excavation in the Gay and Lesbian Archives of South Africa’, in Carolyn Hamilton et al. (eds.), *Reconfiguring the Archive*, Dordrecht, Boston and London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002, p. 193.

protecting Wood's reputation. This incident illustrates how archivists in potentially homophobic institutions react to a social taboo like homosexuality in the church for the official preservation and how homosexual lives and histories are represented within the public records of institutions.⁸⁰ The notion of neutrality and objectivity associated with the institutional archives is displaced and etiolated in this case.

Still, against such historical and contemporary homophobia or biased archival keepers, current studies of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT studies or queer studies as an umbrella term for studies of sexual and gender minorities) call for more diversified and sophisticated roles and methodologies for archival preservation, protection, public access, and sharing. For avoiding such potential risks of heterosexist destruction and exclusion, alternative institutions and archives have emerged since the 1970s throughout North America and Europe.⁸¹ These alternative archives collect and create queer histories and life experiences in other systems and forms of archival remains, embracing more indefinite categorisations and multifaceted characteristics of gender and sexual minorities. In addition, they are more interested in engaging with "the multitude of identifications, experiences and discourses" that come from grassroots-based queer lives outside of oppressive social orders and normalising forces.⁸²

In this sense, one of the differentiated features from traditional archive holdings is that the queer archives prefer "ephemera" as a main medium for their collections, usually categorised as miscellanea in archives. Both Ann Cvetkovich and José Esteban Muñoz see queers as collectors of ephemera by which queer archives have their own values and idiosyncrasies in terms of new models of archiving and subject specificity that are undervalued in official histories. Cvetkovich indicates that marginal and ephemeral materials such as pornographic books, popular cultural artefacts, short-run magazines, and anonymous flyers are likely to be found in queer collections.⁸³ What queers are more concerned with is

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 194.

⁸¹ Danbolt, op. cit., 2009, p. 32.

⁸² Alana Kumbier, *Ephemeral Material: Queering the Archive*, Sacramento: Litwin Books, 2014, p. 7.

⁸³ Cvetkovich, op. cit., p. 243.

intimate sexuality and leisure culture of their everyday life, so their archival selection and inclusion often deviate from the normalising principles of mainstream historical and research interests. Similarly, Muñoz argues that this ephemerality is a key to understanding queer archives:

Instead of being clearly available as visible evidence, queerness has instead existed as innuendo, gossip, fleeting moments, and performances that are meant to be interacted with by those within its epistemological sphere – while evaporating at the touch of those who would eliminate queer possibility.⁸⁴

His argument about ephemeral evidence of queer archives supports the fact that queer presence and acts are apt to be excluded from institutional procedures of archiving because of the temporary and provisional quality of queer culture. Muñoz regards ephemerality as a queer strategy to confront certain conventions and protocols of the institutional ideology guarding “solid” materiality and excluding anecdotal and performative knowledge of queerness.⁸⁵ In line with Muñoz’s account, Cvetkovich emphasises the importance of queer archives, as the unusual value of ephemeral and marginal materials can alternatively reconstruct queer histories and genealogies while mainstream public archives have failed or neglected to record them.⁸⁶

Queer archival art is built upon such alternative languages, reflecting ephemeral ideas and values associated with what Cvetkovich and Muñoz argue here. There are largely two types of archives that queer archival artists engage with: institutionally affiliated archives and private, undisclosed house archives. The latter tends to contain particular lives or intimate stories of ordinary individuals, have more sexually explicit contents, and can be more open to artists to get involved in further artistic creations, in contrast to the former, which is usually run according to the needs of institutional policies and the quest of the general public. In either case, when artists intervene in different types of archives, their artistic visions, productions, and collaborations often develop to destabilise prescriptive methods or rules within the existing

⁸⁴ José Esteban Muñoz, ‘Ephemeral as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts’, in *Women & Performance*, No. 16, Vol. 8, Issue 2, 1996, p. 6.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-11.

⁸⁶ Cvetkovich, *op. cit.*, p. 243.

archives beyond the norm as the site of contests. Otherwise, they newly construct fictional or performative archives on their own to more radically suggest an idiosyncratic way of recording and preserving queer repressed cultures and memories of love, gender, and sexuality.

The Polish artist Karol Radziszewski (b. 1980) has undertaken, since 2009, a long-term project of archival research and art productions, *Kisieland* (Fig. 3.2.1), which brings the undercurrent history and secret scenes of the LGBT community and its activism in Poland into the public sphere. In the course of his research on queer art and activism in Europe, including his native country, Radziszewski encountered Ryszard Kisiel's private archive that was built by Kisiel, his boyfriend, and a group of their friends. Kisiel (b. 1948) was a founder of the queer-themed magazine, *FILO*, published in Poland during the 1980s. Kisiel's house collections that he had collected over the decades consist of past issues of *FILO*, hundreds of homoerotic slides depicting himself and his boyfriend, and queer-related ephemera such as posters and leaflets.⁸⁷ Kisiel was not an artist or an archivist. While working at a printing company, he confidentially recorded his private sexual life and queer identity through archival accumulation and published a zine for the inner circle of the queer community. It was a time when homosexual minorities were persecuted under the communist government of Poland. With a strong tradition of Catholicism, the Polish culture was intolerant and fearful of other types of sexualities, regarding them as abnormal or deviant.⁸⁸ There was even a secret operation of the Polish communist police, called as "Hyacinth", to detect and list all homosexuals and people who had contact with them, and as a result, many people were questioned and arrested, and the homosexual presence in Poland went underground.⁸⁹ Kisiel's collections could have been destroyed if found by the police. However, his secretive activities and collections have fortunately survived. Kisiel's personal act of obsessive collecting made his entire home an archive itself, which contributed to the preservation of other histories of the marginal outside of

⁸⁷ Ela Bittencourt, 'Queering the Archive: When a Personal Act of Collecting Turns Political', *Art Practical*, issue 5.3/ On Collecting, 2014, [Online] Available at: <http://www.artpractical.com/feature/queering-the-archive-when-a-personal-act-of-collecting-turns-political/>, Last accessed 4 December 2016.

⁸⁸ Iwona Zielinska, 'Who Is Afraid of Sexual Minorities? Homosexuals, Moral Panic and the Exercise of Social Control', *Occasional Paper 1*, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw and Centre for Criminological Research, University of Sheffield, 2005, p. 4.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

official histories. In short, his unique collections of ephemera and homoeroticism have become particular emotional, relational, and political evidence of Poland's queer subculture and activism, which have long been oppressed by homophobic cultural prejudice and governmental policies.



Figure 3.2.1. Karol Radziszewski, *Kisieland*, 2012/2011, From the set, Radziszewski's Studio

Like Kisiel, Radziszewski is a founder and publisher of a fagazine (a magazine dealing with gay issues and interests), *DIK*, focusing on homosexuality and queer art, published since 2005. As a precursor of his activities and projects, Radziszewski finds that Kisiel's *FILO* is the pioneer example of sharing a sense of fellowship among homosexual communities, testifying about the early years of the AIDS epidemic and giving insights into the underground queer culture in Eastern Europe in the 1980s.⁹⁰ As Cvetkovich and Muñoz point out, the key activities and archival practices of both Kisiel and Radziszewski are centred on ephemera. Perhaps, this

⁹⁰ Bittencourt, op. cit.

disappearing format as evidence of queer histories may be the most effective medium to capture the ephemeral feelings of queer subjectivity, fleeting moments of queer performances, and underground conditions of queer knowledge that are considered not archivable by the conventional archival criteria. In addition, the queer strategy of ephemerality in Muñoz's sense acts as a challenge to destabilise and fill conceptual and physical gaps in heteronormative-oriented archiving. In particular, under the highly repressive circumstances of Poland, this provisional and quickly circulating format of ephemeral materials must have been necessary to alternatively and repeatedly retain the essence of queer life and culture. What, then, do queer archives built upon these marginal and ephemeral materials specifically transmit or perform? The material specificities of grassroots queer archives can be more experimental and challengeable than those of state-funded institutional archives, which sometimes tell more than their literal value.⁹¹ According to Muñoz, the repetitively accumulated queer ephemera conveys "specific dealings, specific rhythms" of queer culture against dominant systems of aesthetic and institutional categorisation, which can be defined as "a structure of feeling".⁹² He goes on to argue:

Queerness, too, can be understood as a structure of feeling. Since queerness has not been let to stand, unassailed, in the mass public sphere, it has often existed and circulated as a shared structure of feeling that encompasses same-sex desire and other minoritarian sexualities but also holds other dissident affective relationships to different aspects of the sex/gender system.⁹³

It can be said that the queer archive as a structure of feeling not only constructs particular sentiments and attitudes on sharing marginal desires and memories but also politically deconstructs the heteronormative logic and the language of the sex/gender system with a nonconforming yet affective approach. In the meantime, Cvetkovich emphasises that the marginal materials of queers deliver "affects associated with nostalgia, personal memory,

⁹¹ Cvetkovich, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

⁹² Muñoz, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

fantasy and trauma”, which “make a document significant”.⁹⁴ She then identifies this feature of the queer archive as “an archive of feelings”:

The archive of feelings is both material and immaterial, at once incorporating objects that might not ordinarily be considered archival, and at the same time, resisting documentation because sex and feelings are too personal or ephemeral to leave records. For this reason and others, the archive of feelings lives not just in museum, libraries, and other institutions but in more personal and intimate spaces, and significantly, also within cultural genres.⁹⁵

Both Muñoz and Cvetkovich propose the uniqueness of queer archives as preserving and transmitting this expansive, unruly, and subtle territory of “feelings”. Feelings are traditionally not realms of historical writing or archives. Again, the defiant and liberating gesture of queers to identify themselves differently archives queer historical fragments of intimacy and sexuality and at the same time repeatedly anarchives normalising knowledge and discourses.

Let me return to Kisiel and Radziszewski and see what their practices speak for in relation to “the archive of feelings”. Kisiel’s archival impulse towards “not only the subterranean and the erotic but also the trivial and ordinary” serves as “a vital cultural testimony” of the silent activity of queers.⁹⁶ As an artistic mediator and activist, Radziszewski uncovers and illuminates the hidden legacy of the queer world and its art in Eastern Europe through Kisiel’s archive, corresponding to the relatively dominant exposure of Western European and American queer scenes. In other words, his series of projects on queer archives is an attempt at reconstructing the history of the Polish LGBT that has failed to be publicly discussed both inside and outside Poland.⁹⁷ As part of this endeavour, Radziszewski created a documentary film, *Kisieland*, in 2012, based on a selection of slides featuring homoerotic bodies and acts between Kisiel and his boyfriend, depicting a highly private and intimate sexual relationship. Kisiel moved his recording medium from the publication of *FILLO* to photographic

⁹⁴ Cvetkovich, op. cit., pp. 243-244.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 244.

⁹⁶ Bittencourt, op. cit.

⁹⁷ Tomasz Basiuk, ‘Kisieland (2009-ongoing)’, on Karol Radziszewski’s official website, [Online] Available at: <http://www.karolradziszewski.com/index.php/projects/kisieland/>, Last accessed 7 December 2016.

slides and drag performances for a small audience in a private apartment.⁹⁸ This change in documenting was an even more daring decision because of the high risk of attracting people's notice under the Polish anti-gay policy. Radziszewski's *Kisieland* focuses on the immediate and evocative emotions and affects embedded in Kisiel's visual documentation. Radziszewski invited Kisiel to his studio and asked him to re-enact the performances and the process of photo shoots that happened 25 years ago with the assistance of a male model.⁹⁹ Radziszewski's re-enactment in the form of an art production not only openly revisits and reconstructs the neglected historical knowledge of queer communities and aesthetics in the 1980s but also emphasises queer feelings embedded within survived archival remains. Kisiel's original slides contain expressive and provocative poses, acts, and messages playing out emotional and sexual appeals for same-sex bodies and fear of AIDS. In *Kisieland*, these particular feelings and the tactile process of the former shoots are repeated but performed with differences, as the original contexts and emotions can never be entirely and identically retrievable in the present. Nevertheless, Radziszewski's invitation to Kisiel and the re-enactment of the archived performances cause forgotten, buried archival remains to appear and reappear here and now, again and again. Above all, *Kisieland* offers an opportunity "to restage an eroticised space of fantasy and desire, even if the same deep sexual and emotional attachments that enriched Kisiel's original production are not recoverable".¹⁰⁰ Kisiel's homoerotic performance, already recorded in the past slides and restaged in the current documentary film, is "a gesture meant to break imposing taboos".¹⁰¹ In doing so, Kisiel's archive of feelings can constantly exist in both material and immaterial senses and can transfer not just knowledge but sensations of queer sexualities and concerns, penetrating or breaking through the typically heteronormative understanding of history writing and archives.

⁹⁸ Bittencourt, op. cit.

⁹⁹ Karol Radziszewski, *Kisieland* (2012), on Karol Radziszewski's official website, [Online] Available at: <http://www.karolradziszewski.com/index.php?/videos-films/kisieland/>, Last accessed 8 December 2016.

¹⁰⁰ Bittencourt, op. cit.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

Constructing Queer Time and Space through Fictional Archives

Together with intervening in institutional or house queer archives, another critical strategy of queer archival art is developing fictional archives that unfold queer marginal subjectivity, histories, and feelings in a more emancipatory and inventive manner. Queer fictional archives still mirror the reality of the actual world but can more expansively create queer time and space without imposing heteronormative dispositions. Constructing new or imaginative archives opens up an alternative and performative way of archiving and writing history for sexual and social minorities. This fictional world of queer archives leads us to “unregulated territories”, raising more questions rather than offering determined answers as Halberstam argues.¹⁰²

The pseudo archives and fictional narratives by Rudy Lemcke (b. 1951) in *The Search for Life in Distant Galaxies* (2010) (Fig. 3.2.2) reflect such features of queer archival art. A hybrid form of archival research and storytelling portrays the mysterious life of a gay man, Ed Marker, who attempts to learn who he is and where he comes from. The life story and traces of this fabricated character living in the Tenderloin District of San Francisco are presented in a series of video clips, audio files, photographic images, and written narratives on the Web. In fact, this project only exists in and can be explored only through the Internet. Lemcke suggests four different ways to navigate the narratives of Ed Marker.¹⁰³ (1) Following hyperlinks in the menu of *The Search for Life in Distant Galaxies*, users can read a chronological series of events in the life of the main character; (2) following hyperlinks in “Ed Marker’s 1968 Box”, users can explore the various media of the contents, such as texts, maps, images, and videos; (3) by clicking “Appendix A: Site Readings”, users can download a series of texts that are meant to be read at specific sites located in the Tenderloin District; and (4) by clicking “Appendix B: Field Recordings”, users can listen to a 15-part audio podcast and take a walking tour of Ed Marker’s world. Surfing through the given hyperlinks, users can travel around Ed Marker’s eccentric archival research and life journey with multiple entries and rhizomatically expanding possibilities of narratives. This discursive and rhizomatic approach to understanding the project

¹⁰² Halberstam, op. cit., 2011, p. 10.

¹⁰³ Rudy Lemcke, *The Search for Life in Distant Galaxies*: ‘Introduction’, 2010, [Online] Available: <http://rudylemcke.com/the-search-for-life/>, Last accessed 8 December 2016.

already implies the ways in which the main character collects, studies, assembles, and interprets things in the course of searching for his identity and origin. I shall discuss this further later.



Figure 3.2.2. Rudy Lemcke, *The Search for Life in Distant Galaxies: Ed Marker's 1968 Box*, 2010

The key stories are developed through archival evidence of “Ed Marker’s 1968 Box”, which is known as the only surviving portion of Marker’s archives. The box was donated by an anonymous donor to San Francisco’s GLBT Historical Society archives so that Marker’s life stories and research materials would be disclosed as a result of the cataloguing process. The box contains “several notebooks, photo albums, drawings, a few maps, a collection of odd postcards, a couple of books, a small box of 8mm films and some other miscellaneous odds and

ends”.¹⁰⁴ Seemingly having no noteworthy value and no consistent meanings, all the contents somehow indicate Marker’s quotidian yet persistent research on a peculiar link between his life in Tenderloin District and life in distant galaxies in the universe. While working in a flower shop, Marker conducted his scientific research in the San Francisco Public Library on Saturdays. The story says, “He believed that there were mysterious connections between his life and life in distant galaxies, that the movement of the universe was mirrored in the streets he inhabited – that the great secrets of space and time were contained right here and now, in the place that circumscribed his life”.¹⁰⁵ For Marker, the Tenderloin District is a kind of passage through time portals or time travel to distant galaxies, holding some hidden plans for the universe, so he tried to investigate and map the strange phenomena of his residential district.¹⁰⁶ With this unknown and mysterious conviction, Marker’s theories and activities were fuelled by his feverish archival research and collection of related ephemeral materials. Marker shared his research idea with and was inspired by people around him. Among other characters in the stories, two gay men significantly influenced Marker’s archival project and life: his partner James and his friend and guardian DB. After James’ death, Marker’s obsession with his unfinished project of finding distant galaxies was left solely in his hands. DB was the manager of the apartment where Marker had lived for decades in San Francisco. One day, Marker was told that he had to leave his home because of building development, and it was DB who had to tell Marker that he had to leave.¹⁰⁷ This was a day of big change. No traces of Marker were recorded afterwards. He left some of his belongings with DB and moved forwards into the undecided future.

I suppose that for Ed Marker’s fictional storytelling, San Francisco is a symbolic place because it is an important city for the history of LGBT rights and activism and has the largest LGBT community in the world. Ed Marker’s fictional queer archives can be interpreted as an

¹⁰⁴ Lemcke, *The Search for Life in Distant Galaxies*: ‘Ed Marker’s 1968 Box’, 2010, [Online] Available at: <http://rudylemcke.com/portfolio/ed-markers-1968-box/>, Last accessed 10 December 2016.

¹⁰⁵ Lemcke, *The Search for Life in Distant Galaxies*: ‘His More Serious Work’, 2010, [Online] Available at: <http://rudylemcke.com/portfolio/his-more-serious-work/>, Last accessed 10 December 2016.

¹⁰⁶ Lemcke, ‘Catalog of 1968 Box’, 2010, [Online] Available at: <http://rudylemcke.com/portfolio/catalog-of-1968-box/>, Last accessed 10 December 2016.

¹⁰⁷ Lemcke, *The Search for Life in Distant Galaxies*: ‘The Book of Changes’, 2010, [Online] Available at: <http://rudylemcke.com/portfolio/the-book-of-changes/>, Last accessed 10 December 2016.

attempt to construct queer time and space against the background of this most gay-friendly city. By interweaving fictitious stories about Marker's relationships and friendships; living, working, and visiting places; and research sources and materials, a zone free of heteronormativity and homophobia seems to be repeatedly imagined without any imposed constraints for successful research outcomes or decisive answers. Marker's unfinished project of completing archival collections and discovering secret routes to distant galaxies constantly stimulate curiosity about the unknown territory of the distant galaxies where Marker believed he originally came from. However, the story does not indicate whether Marker's endeavour to find his origin was accomplished or not. I argue that this incompleteness or imperfection could be integral to theorising on queer histories and temporalities, which deviate or escape from the disciplined, determined language of heteronormativity. The existence of distant galaxies in actuality may not be the point of this story, but rather, the performative journey itself of searching for these imaginative territories is a more essential part of storytelling and giving queering meanings or aims. Queer subjectivities and histories can emerge in this repetitive process of wandering, navigating, detouring, and getting lost as seen in Ed Marker's search for distant galaxies. With "a multi-dimensional, non-hierarchical [and] non-linear lens",¹⁰⁸ Marker's navigational trajectory, creating queer time and space, functions not as a meaningless failure but as a transitional and playful state of knowing and not knowing in the making. As I mentioned earlier, it is precisely the same way in which the narrative web of hyperlinks opens up rhizomatic virtual expansion to assemble Ed Marker's world, which has no beginning or end but always has the middle to get into the stories.

Above all, Ed Marker's queer archives are intermingled with different stories of the past, present, and future at the same time in a non-linear sense. According to Marker's theories, his past life in distant galaxies and current life in the Tenderloin District are interconnected, while the potentiality of his future life in distant galaxies is always embedded in the story making. The distant galaxies are the coexisting world of the past and future here. In his

¹⁰⁸ Barbara McBane, 'A Queer Archival Impulse, Lineage: Matchmaking in the Archives', unpublished, 2011, p. 5, [Online] Available at: <https://egcrichon.sites.ucsc.edu/writing/>, Last accessed 10 December 2016.

portfolio named “The Future”, there are drawings from his earlier time in the past. These drawings depict “a time before he began his more serious work; a place where he believed everything was possible”.¹⁰⁹ In particular, the ambiguous end of Ed Marker’s traces after moving out of his apartment and the open-ended narratives imply that there will be more journeys and stories to come in the future. When Marker finally decided to leave his old house of archives, he started to sort out finished and unfinished research materials, categorise collections, and carefully label boxes. Suddenly, he realised something while packing. His last words allude to his new start in his research and journey:

He finally had the courage to assemble the cardboard boxes that were stacked in the entranceway to the apartment. [...] It hit him like a bolt of lightning. His data was flawed. He realised his entire system was flawed. He knew from his reading in quantum mechanics how the observed was influenced by the observer; yet it had never occurred to him until this moment, while sorting through the contents of his life, that he might have been polluting his own research by his failure to observe and record his own motivations, his intentions, his feelings, as part of the data. How could he have made such a titanic theoretical error? How could he have not been aware of this blind spot? [...] He would have to start over. Everything must be reconsidered, rethought. [...] And like the flash of a passing comet through the night sky, everything was gone; packed away in DB’s apartment, or given to community thrift, or thrown into a dumpster – at that moment he passed into the future.¹¹⁰

On realising the failures and errors in his research, it seems that Marker’s straying and drifting through different zones of time and space would enter a new phase with another incessant process of sorting out the imperfect materials from the past, deconstructing the old archives of already collected evidence or a produced database and constructing the new archives of things to come. In short, “a story of dislocation and struggle for reintegration” is set to repeat again, as

¹⁰⁹ Lemcke, *The Search for Life in Distant Galaxies*: ‘The Future’, 2010, [Online] Available at: <http://rudylemcke.com/portfolio/the-future/>, Last accessed 11 December 2016.

¹¹⁰ Lemcke, *The Search for Life in Distant Galaxies*: ‘Final Sequence’, 2010, [Online] Available at: <http://rudylemcke.com/portfolio/final-sequence/>, Last accessed 11 December 2016.

Ed Marker's stories indicate at the beginning.¹¹¹ Marker chose to move forward into the future rather than lamenting and staying in the past. He left hard evidence behind and moved forward to his next steps. He may still be wandering around or probably will settle down in the future world of distant galaxies. In any case, *The Search for Life in Distant Galaxies* dwells in the ambulatory state between failure and success, resisting the permanent settlement and implicating a multitude of positive and hopeful potentialities: the unknown, uncategorised, unregulated, and undetermined. Lemcke's practice of a queer archival impulse based on the fictional online platform of storytelling suggests a playful and emancipatory way for queers to get lost or navigate as a multiple mode of being, time, and space, which can be part of a queer counter-discourse in favour of ephemerality, temporality, and elusiveness.

Queer Lineage: Creating Collaborative and Affective Connections

People wander, sometimes by choice, sometimes by necessity or force. Queer people seem to wander in particular ways. We find each other still through underground routes of site and recognition. Sometimes we migrate to strange cities, looking for signs, sometimes we are free, sometimes in grave danger. We might nestle into safe zones, with others alone; we might live publically, or we might create elaborate masks and risk everything. We have nothing to declare, yet everything. We look for references, we look for a past, sometimes we invent one.¹¹²

If Rudy Lemcke's archival art looks for an alternative queer writing and recording through fictional storytelling, E.G. Crichton's interactive queer archiving contributes to investigating the new use of archival remains: performing, re-editing, migrating, travelling, collaborating, and networking. The archival works of Crichton that I shall discuss below explore queer wandering and inventing its own past and communality by engaging with archives of mutual conversations and dialogues. In doing so, the underground communication of the queer world and invisible, unheard life stories of queers are brought out into the public discussion across

¹¹¹ Lemcke, *The Search for Life in Distant Galaxies*: 'Introduction', 2010, [Online] Available at: <http://rudylemcke.com/the-search-for-life/>, Last accessed 11 December 2016.

¹¹² E. G. Crichton, 'Migrating Archives', *Art Journal*, Summer Vol. 72, No. 2, 2013, p. 51.

genders, professions, nations, and races. For Crichton, the archive is a place where people talk, gather, share, collaborate, and interconnect.

Crichton participated in an Artist in Residence programme at the GLBT Historical Society in San Francisco in 2008. As the first artist in the residence programme, she contemplated how to expose the archive and “how to bring archives, history, off the archive shelf into creative visibility”.¹¹³ Her project, *Lineage: Matchmaking in the Archive* (2009–present) (Fig. 3.2.3) was initiated during the period of her artist residence and has unfolded into a series of exhibitions, public events, community participations, and writings. While cruising the archives of the GLBT Historical Society, what caught Crichton’s eye first was ephemeral and ordinary items such as a love letter on a napkin, a pair of gloves, and an unpublished sci-fi novel.¹¹⁴ For the first version of this project, Crichton matched these specific archival materials from the dead to 11 living individuals and asked them to creatively react to the selected archive in their own ways. She chose materials that had not yet been disclosed in public and matched a pair of the dead and the living without any personal links to each other. The results of the matchmaking varied in media: live performance, video, sculpture, photography, painting, poetry, letters, and musical composition. These newly produced archives in the form of installations and display units were presented in an exhibition at the GLBT Historical Society in 2009. Intermingling stories and objects of both the dead and the living together, the exhibition space was full of odd yet intimate relationships, uncanny feelings of unexpected encounters, and dynamic interconnections between the past and present.

¹¹³ Crichton, ‘LINEAGE: Matchmaking in the Archive’, presented paper at College Art Association Conference, 2010, p. 8, [Online] Available at: <https://egcrichton.sites.ucsc.edu/writing/>, Last accessed 12 December 2016.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

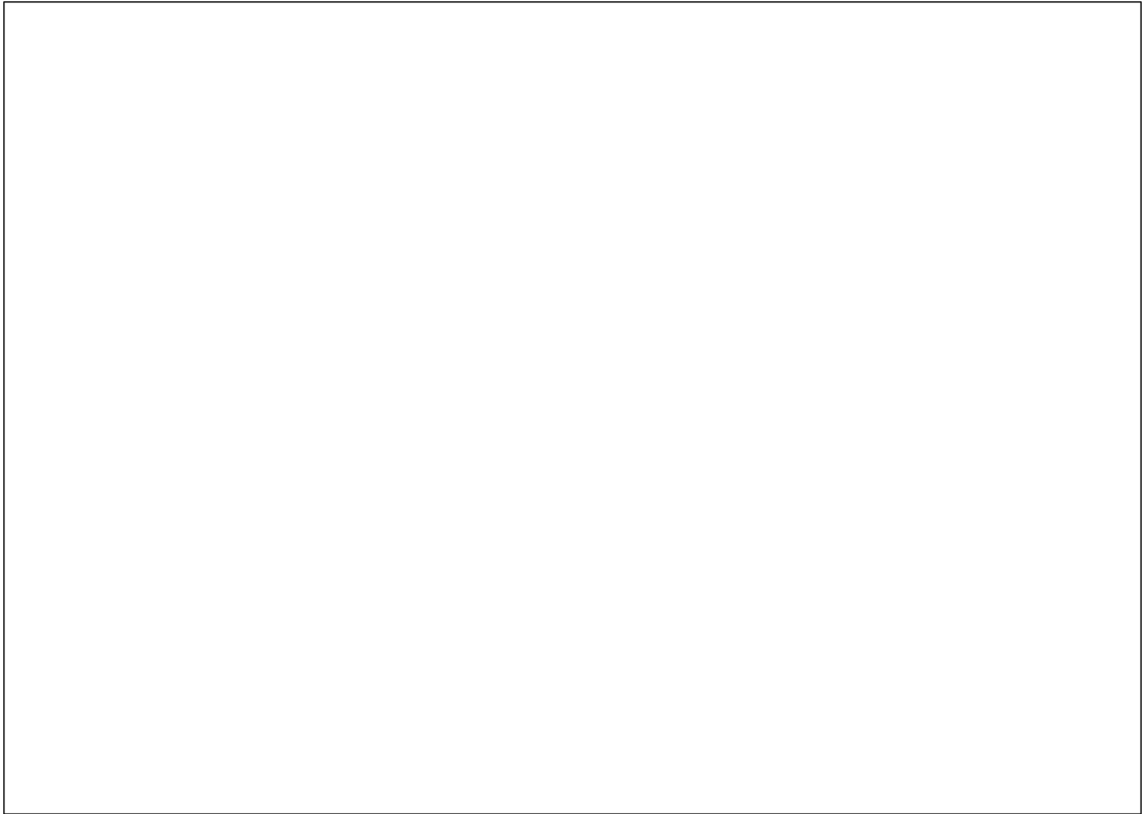


Figure 3.2.3. E.G. Crichton, *Lineage: Matchmaking in the Archive* –
Lauren Crux and Janny MacHarg, 2009, Paris

Crichton’s matchmaking seeks to “[foster] a form of *lineage*”¹¹⁵ by revealing particular affections and emotional links that emerged from the voluntary process of reading the given archival remains about a specific person, searching deeper for the dead’s life stories and transforming them into something relevant or sympathetic in the contemporary context. Both the dead people from the archives and the living participants lived or live outside the heterosexual norms. When these two parties are encountered, Crichton says, “the intense dyadic relationships forming in this process are becoming a kind of lineage, one that resides outside bloodlines and marriage contracts and often outside of identity boundaries”.¹¹⁶ This queer matching via archives is an alternative attempt at finding a queer lineage from its comrades beyond the heteronormative pedigrees based on reproduction and patriarchy. It partly comes

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Karen Charman and E. G. Crichton, ‘The Wandering Archive: Ruth Reid and Kent Hyde, a Memoir’, 2013, p. 1, [Online] Available at: <https://egcrichton.sites.ucsc.edu/writing/>, Last accessed 12 December 2016.

from Crichton's own need to figure out why she is a lesbian and who she can "look back to as antecedents".¹¹⁷ When matchmaking, she considered some common ground between the dead and their contemporary counterparts in terms of similar interests or demographics. The paired examples of antecedent and descendant are as follows: singer-songwriter Jannie MacHarg and performance artist Lauren Crux, self-taught musician Larry Langry and experimental composer Luciano Chessa, Japanese American Jiro Onuma, who survived as a gay man in a Japanese Internment camp, and Japanese artist and writer Tina Takemoto, and disabled lesbian Dian Hugaert and disabled lesbian Dominika Bednarska. Such one-to-one matches allowed each participant to have an individual journey to discover mutual similarities and differences, which actively facilitated the construction of a unique lineage and an imaginative affinity with a complete stranger. In relation to this, Tirza True Latimer, curator of the first *Lineage* exhibition, states that "these archives, animated by creative impulses, unsettle our ideas about who we are, where we come from, who we want to be, and how we remember".¹¹⁸ In other words, the archival dialogues of two encountered parties can explore a speculative yet performative sense of archival projects formulating queer historical and emotional ties while unarchiving and undermining the historical truth of the heterosexual knowledge of disciplined bodies and marriage traditions.

In this process of bonding, participants gradually took an intimate step into someone's life such that they had quite a strong emotional attachment to the person they dealt with. This is a very tactile experience as well. The physical and psychological chemistry of the interaction process could generate particular feelings "threaded with the thrill of chance encounters, the lure of fantasy, the possibility of probing deeper. To open a box, pry apart its folders, touch personal artifacts, scrutinise photos and diary entries is unsettling in its voyeurism".¹¹⁹ This somewhat erotic sensation or voyeuristic invasion in the making of the alternative lineage

¹¹⁷ Julia Brock, 'Embodying the Archive (Part 2): Lineage, Longings, Migrations', Interview with E. G. Crichton, *National Council On Public History*, April 2013, [Online] Available at: <http://ncph.org/phc/crichton-brock-interview/>, Last accessed 13 December 2016.

¹¹⁸ Tirza True Latimer, '1st *Lineage* Exhibition: Curatorial Statement', June 2009, [Online] Available at: <https://egcrichton.sites.ucsc.edu/projects/matchmaking-in-the-archive/2009-2/>, Last accessed 14 December 2016.

¹¹⁹ Crichton, op. cit., 2010, p. 1.

echoes Cvetkovich's account of an archive of feelings, as I discussed earlier. Some interviews of participants testify to their archival journeys of feelings. First, Lauren Crux states:

Think about a blind date: the awkwardness, the hopefulness, the disappointments, the not-knowing. I kept wanting to bail on the whole thing. But then something shifted, and I came to appreciate and deeply care for Janny. [...] When I heard her song tapes, I fell in love. She had a deep bawdy humour and I wanted to know her ... I have been creating a friendship with a dead person. I notice the shift to present tense. I find myself writing Janny will like this story ... I wanted her approval. Now I have to remind myself I never actually MET her.¹²⁰

Luciano Chessa also recalls, "All of a sudden, I was rapturously moved by a few clumsy, copyrighted devotional verses. Why? Larry was hardly an amateur. Was this a lesson in humility?"¹²¹ In addition, Tina Takemoto claims, "Jiro Onuma is my gay Japanese American role model, queer accomplice and friend".¹²² These examples show that feelings of intimacy, sexuality, friendship, and love are cultivated in the course of queer archival matchmaking. In fact, the queer archive of feelings does not always (re)produce such positive emotions of excitement or pleasure but reveals traumatic or tabooed experiences as the marginal in society, including fear of AIDS, sexual perversion, social persecution, cultural discrimination, and institutional exclusion of official history writing. For these reasons, participants could inevitably and iteratively confront a range of negative feelings of concern, refusal, discomfort, dislike, and repulsion in going through archival investigation.¹²³ Such tabooed scenes or traumatic affections of queers are witnessed in some cases of the third version of the *Lineage* project (2010), exhibited in Paris. For this show, Crichton made one-to-one photographic portraits – each participant standing or performing in front of a photographic panel depicting the archived person, which more visibly emphasised their collaborative and affective chemistry.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 4.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 3.

¹²² Tina Takemoto, 'Gay Bachelor's Japanese American Internment Survival Kit (2009)', 2009, [Online] Available at: <https://egerichton.sites.ucsc.edu/projects/matchmaking-in-the-archive/lineage-pairs/tina-and-jiro/>, Last accessed 14 December 2016.

¹²³ McBane, op. cit., p. 7.

Each work and story of unsettling, struggling, negating, and compromising was unveiled in varied forms of creative works alongside those portraits. The interviews are as follows:

Tina Takemoto (artist and writer) – Jiro Onuma (internment camp prisoner):

I grew up hearing family stories about the Japanese American Internment Camps, but no one ever mentioned the gay and lesbian experience of imprisonment. [...] I try to imagine how Jiro Onuma survived the isolation, boredom, humiliation, and heteronormativity of internment as a dandyish gay bachelor obsessed with erotic male physical culture magazines.¹²⁴

Dorian Katz (artist and curator) – Cynthia Slater (activist of sadomasochism)

Dear Devoted Gifted Matriarch of Sadism, thank you for taking me in as your mentee.¹²⁵

Gabriella Ripley-Phipps (artist) – Sally Binford (anthropologist):

I had some trouble with this. I don't feel close to Sally. I feel closer to those who loved her. I am not compelled to learn more. I don't like her. If only I could understand her need for control, if only I knew why she loved poodles, if only I knew why she and her daughter were not close. I only see the sides of Sally that were bright and brilliant. Without an understanding of her darkness, I can't know her. [...] I think I would have liked Sally, though she would have been intimidating as all hell. I might have had a crush on her too. Learning about her free ways of living and loving has nurtured my desire to explore a similar pathway of self-loyalty.¹²⁶

Laura Rifkin (artist, writer and activist) – Jessica Barshay (therapist and writer):

¹²⁴ Takemoto, op. cit.

¹²⁵ Dorian Katz, 'So You Wanna Do SM, Huh? (2010)', 2010, [Online] Available at: <https://egrichton.sites.ucsc.edu/projects/matchmaking-in-the-archive/lineage-pairs/dorian-and-cynthia/>, Last accessed 15 December 2016.

¹²⁶ Gabriella Ripley-Phipps, 'The Archival Dinner Party (2009)', 2009, [Online] Available at: <https://egrichton.sites.ucsc.edu/projects/matchmaking-in-the-archive/lineage-pairs/gabriella-and-sally/>, Last accessed 14 December 2016.

Jess' suicide left behind a torn piece of fabric in the universe. I continue to stitch my needle and thread into the fibres of it knowing that it is work I must undertake, even though it cannot be repaired.¹²⁷

Accordingly, queers' repetitive visits to traumatic experiences of the private and public life of sexuality and desire require unusual ways or scopes of documenting, categorising, and presenting memory and affect without reproducing heteronormative logic and linearity. The participants in Crichton's projects seemed to be driven by a compelling need or desire to face the dark sides of queer feelings embedded in the somewhat hidden repository of their antecedents. Cvetkovich argues that archives of trauma address "the acknowledgement of a past that can be painful to remember, impossible to forget and resistance to consciousness" and such traumatic memory and experience demand unusual archives beyond the logic of consciousness.¹²⁸ In particular, she points out that idiosyncrasies of traumatic emotions and feelings in queer archives are revealed through the fragmentary and arbitrary performance of archival narratives that reject cohesive units and consistency.¹²⁹

Taking one more step forward from Cvetkovich's thought, I argue that queer archival art like Crichton's project features a Sisyphean archival journey that constantly navigates both positive and negative feelings of queerness, sometimes failing to fully empathise with the given archival stories of the stranger but repeatedly becoming involved in listening and retelling particular personal stories in the contested ground of homophobia and historical invisibility of queers in mainstream institutions. This could be one possible way of queer "historiographical challenge", as Cvetkovich emphasises.¹³⁰ Queer repeating and failing to imagine someone's life stories from the past also recalls Ed Marker's persistent searching, struggling, wandering, and getting lost in the attempt to find a fateful yet cryptic link to the past, present, and future life of himself as a queer or to the dream of liberating the queer world. Marker's journey is always in between the realms of knowing and not knowing. So to speak, through a historiographical

¹²⁷ Laura Rifkin, 'Jess Unfurling (2010)', 2010, [Online] Available at: <https://egcrichton.sites.ucsc.edu/projects/matchmaking-in-the-archive/lineage-pairs/laura-and-jessica/>, Last accessed 14 December 2016.

¹²⁸ Cvetkovich, *op. cit.*, pp. 241-242.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

challenge, queer archival artists repetitively seek to construct the new archival languages that can differently pull equivocal and coded queer senses from the archives. Likewise, participants in Crichton's matchmaking archives are not expected to take any responsibility to commemorate their archival subjects or to establish a typical form of memorial.¹³¹ Instead, their resulting responses formulate an arbitrary and fragmented combination of ephemeral artefacts, performative dialogues, transformative moments, or participatory events through which collaborative and affective connections between the archive subjects, matchmaking participants, and viewers are more actively produced and stretched. For example, Troy Boyd wrote a thank-you letter to George Choy, Nomy Lamm had a band jam session at the GLBT Historical Society based on Silvia Kohan's old songs, and Luciano Chessa composed and performed an aria from Larry Decaesar's handwritten libretto from the archival box.¹³² These artistic productions map another modality of archiving – remembering and telling as “conversation rather than mastery”.¹³³

Crichton's collaborative and conversational sense of projects has crossed geographical and cultural borders under the name *Migrating Archives* (2010–2015). This series of migratory and exchange programmes of archives and archival art works was developed from *Lineage: Matchmaking in the Archive*, involving travelling around the world to countries including Italy, Portugal, Australia, the Philippines, Lebanon, and the Netherlands. For the projects, a range of queer archive organisations participated, interconnected, and collaborated, such as the British National Archives, Glasgow Women's Library, Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives, GALA in Johannesburg, Labrisz Lesbian Association in Budapest, and Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art in New York.¹³⁴ Crichton calls these participating organisations “delegate archives” from which the spirit and culture of queer communities can be represented.

Crichton's intention is basically to exchange intangible social and cultural assets of queers that stagnantly reside in different types of archival organisations and to build a transnational lineage

¹³¹ McBane, op. cit., p. 8.

¹³² Crichton, op. cit., 2013, p. 53.

¹³³ Halberstam, op. cit., 2011, p. 12.

¹³⁴ See the list of and links to participating organisations for the *Migrating Archives* projects, on Crichton's official website, [Online] Available at: <https://egrichton.sites.ucsc.edu/migrating-archives-delegates/>, Last accessed 17 December 2016.

of queers via archives in motion. This not only denotes the nomadic journeys of queers voluntarily or involuntarily immigrating, wandering, and navigating here and there to look for their own safety, partners, comrades, lineages, and history but also suggests a queer performative historiography on the basis of cooperative recognitions and affective connections.

One of the projects, *Wandering Archives Across the Pacific* (2011), was set up between two cities, Manila and Amsterdam. As part of the exhibition *Nothing to Declare* at multiple venues in the Philippines, Crichton brought eight match-making archival works in which eight pairs of the dead and the living were encountered. These migrated archives were exhibited in the Philippines as an installation, titled *Mga Sinupang Lagalag (Wandering Archives)*.¹³⁵ Carried in the artist's suitcase, these eight paired artistic dialogues across different times and places were brought into foreign territory and introduced to a local audience. Afterwards, this archival displacement was connected to another archival relation. While staying in Manila, Crichton got to know two lesbians, Giney Villar and Beth Angsioco, who owned a restaurant and culture centre named Adarna, and they donated one of their archive collections pertaining to the lives of two Filipino gay men from the early 1900s.¹³⁶ This archive from the Philippines travelled back across the Pacific in her suitcase and was eventually transformed into a new archival work shown in the Netherlands. The Dutch version of *Migrating Archives* (2012) was realised at the international Archives, Libraries, Museums and Special Collections conference in Amsterdam. In curating the conference exhibition, Crichton approached all participating organisations in the conference and asked them to send her digital copies of image and text collections of two representative individuals from their archives. A large number of organisations responded to her request. Consequently, a new matchmaking of 23 archives was created and exhibited at the conference venue, where more than a hundred organisations from all over the world gathered and exchanged ideas about queer-focused issues. The archive materials of two Filipino gay men from Manila were also included as one of the newly invented

¹³⁵ Crichton, 'Wandering Archives Across the Pacific (Manila, Philippines, 2011)', 2011, [Online] Available at: <https://egrichton.sites.ucsc.edu/projects/migrating-archives-2/wandering-archives-across-the-pacific-manila-philippines-2011/>, Last accessed 17 December 2017.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

archival works. An expanded version of this project was shown in the GLBT History Museum in San Francisco the next year, titled *Migrating Archives: LGBT Delegates from Around the World*, so Crichton's travelling suitcases of queer archives and archival works were transported to the States across the Atlantic Ocean once again.

Crichton's queer archives in motion or in transmission enable shattered or hidden histories of traumatic and cryptic feelings of queers to be communicated and networked in public on a global scale. Perhaps, her artistic intention lies in hoping for queer immigration and nomads beyond any physical, political, and social barriers or beyond homophobic cultures. According to Mathias Danbolt, a queer framework of collaboration regards archival materials as "friends" of the present rather than as dead objects from the distant past, which facilitates "trans-temporal connections", undermining "the straight time of chronological order and a clear-cut separation between past and present".¹³⁷ In Crichton's *Migrating Archives*, I would say that a queer tie of kinship via archives is performed not only by "trans-temporal" connections but also by "trans-spatial" connections. With a longing to erode the heterosexual value of reproduction and the capitalist fetishism surrounding production and progression, both queer archival artists and the individual archival subjects here can be interpreted as an unruly, nonconforming, and emancipatory being, repeatedly crossing the borders of time and space, moving in and out of archives and transforming strangers into friends. The essential working method of bridging such queer "trans-historical lineage"¹³⁸ creates new interlocutors for constant archival dialogues and sharing of this allied and collaborative sense of queer narratives within the expanded communities of the public. To put it simply, queer archival art practices bringing collaboration and participation suggest a shifting, flexible, and adjustable method of a performative historiography of queers that retells and rewrites the lives and stories of sexual and gender minorities outside the mainstream in a different manner.

Crichton claims that she does not intend to draw from any specific disciplines of historical theories for her archival projects:

¹³⁷ Danbolt, op. cit., 2013, p. 453.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 455.

I feel a sense of freedom as an artist from the disciplinary expectations that I imagine historians are bound to, at least within academia. [...] I can borrow methods and knowledge from history as I do from other disciplines as a kind of amateur, a perpetual dilettante. In relation to archivists, I am much freer to create archives, fill in gaps, reproduce what's absent. The whole notion of migratory archives that I've been working with goes against the archivist's mandate to preserve, catalogue and protect the uniqueness of a particular archive. In my projects, archives become far more fluid, they morph and move and expand and transform into other forms.¹³⁹

Barbara McBane interprets Crichton's attitude to engaging with queer archival narratives morphed into multiple forms of art productions as performing "reparative archival work".¹⁴⁰ McBane goes on to explain that "a project that defies easy categorisation, is polymorphously preserved and constantly morphing, partakes of a fluidity and inclusiveness that invites the participation of many, and has a spirit of permissiveness which – within certain parameters – affords a large measure of creative freedom to those who join the fray".¹⁴¹ Being free from the mandatory duty of a certain way of archiving and history writing, queer archival artists can repeatedly stitch the fragmented or somewhat wounded fabrics of queer lives, identities, and desire together through the reparative efforts of both individual and collective dimensions. Crichton's migratory and participatory archives that are continually morphed and expanded will continue to remember and embrace invisible or erased queer traces outside the normative interests and to imagine a more accessible, sharable, and connectable future of queers.

Such a subtle yet reparative effort and very personal but collaborative process can make a difference, slowly yet certainly. In the last section, I explored the power of collaborative performance or participatory solidarity realised in Francis Alÿs' piece *When Faith Moves Mountains* (2002). This work visualises how the collaboration of 500 people standing in a row moved a huge sand dune in Lima by hand shovelling only, suggesting that a seemingly meaningless and unproductive attempt to do something together could have an impressive

¹³⁹ Brock, op. cit.

¹⁴⁰ McBane, op. cit., p. 5.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 2.

impact on changes in the typical recognition of social orders and circumstances. In this dramatic performance, the dune moved just a few centimetres away. The more important thing here is that every single effort of individual action apparently makes meaningful change, although its result seems to be unproductive and insignificant. Changes can begin with a tiny step. This is why queer artists, individuals, and communities continue to work together to deconstruct the existing disciplines of archival heteronormativity and construct a queer archival lineage of histories and feelings with queer idiosyncratic time and space again and again.

This section, 'Queering the Archive', explored how queer archival art mirrors alternative ways of collecting; recording; identifying; writing; and telling about queer life, desire, and history that undermine the hegemonic archival languages of heteronormativity. Queer anti-disciplinary, performative, and emancipatory modes of archival/anarchival performativity repeatedly produce more questions than decisive answers in favour of ephemerality, temporality, and elusiveness by destabilising any naturalised norms and dichotomous boundaries of mainstream culture and history. Working with personal ephemera and trivial detritus of everyday life, queer archives feverishly accumulate particular histories and idiosyncratic feelings of queers as marginal people who have been devalued and excluded from the official history records. The unique structure of feelings in queer archives often delivers erotic and tactile sensation and voyeuristic and sensory appeal. Having noticeable characteristics of "poetic intervention, speculative re-enactment, storytelling and fantasy",¹⁴² queer archival art experiments differently with how queer trajectories of lives, desires, and affections can be embodied and revealed. In particular, queer fictional archives of storytelling suggest a more imaginative and playful possibility of queer languages, which eventually leads us to the in-between zone where the fluctuating realms of being successful and failing, of knowing and unknowing, and of settling and unsettling can be continually explored and mapped. In doing so, queer time and space are constructed and reconstructed in the perpetual process of wandering and getting lost as a critical strategy or a queer counter-discourse. The queer journey and effort of looking for queer antecedents and comrades are propelled by both

¹⁴² Latimer, op. cit.

individual and collective levels of collaboration across national, social, and cultural borders. The constant dialogues and affective connections, created through the migratory and participatory practices of queer archival art in motion, enable the formulation of a “trans-temporal” and “trans-spatial” queer lineage, which contributes to openly witnessing more visible and connectable stories and voices of queer sexuality, love, desire, art, and life.

Throughout Chapter 3, the idea of failure, a key element of Sisyphean archival/anarchival performativity together with repetition, has been thoroughly examined. Inspired by Aaron Williamson’s performance *The Collapsing Lecture*, I illuminated four different aspects of staging failure in relation to the realm of archival art: a polyphonic creativity of fallible attempts through performing archival remains, bodily gestures of archival failure bringing participatory spectatorship, a critical capacity of failure as a seemingly purposeless labour and futile process, and queer reconsideration of normative categorisation. Applying Williamson’s aesthetics of failure in the sections titled ‘Performing the Archive’ and ‘Queering the Archive’, I endeavoured to convey that rhythmical alterations of failures are embodied in Sisyphean archival art as different approaches to archival remains. The multifaceted potentiality of failure as a critical and navigational tool has reversed the negative perception that failing moments, regarded as errors or anomalies, could encroach on the stable and logical state of archival order and reality at every level. Rather, the failing rhythms deconstruct a habitual mode of archival thinking as resistance to the prescriptive discourse of totality, mastery, and perfectionism and reconstruct a space of uncertainty and of contestation embracing a multitude of categories and possibilities. Failure is not the oppositional notion of success but that of many others: persistent; rebellious; transgressive; reflective; speculative; reparative; permissive; playful; emancipatory; participatory; poetic; doubtful; inclusive; and nonconforming ways of being, thinking, doing, and knowing.

CONCLUSION

My project of mapping the Sisyphean archives has endeavoured to display a dynamic geography of archival/anarchival performativity driven by rhythms of repetition and failure in contemporary archival art, primarily since the 1960s. Applying a cartographic methodology of mapping, I intended to produce a subthemed chapter in which each layer independently describes a specific inclination of Sisyphean archival art in detail, yet correlatively reveals a bigger picture of what archival/anarchival performativity of Sisyphean archives in art ultimately does and critiques. I have delineated discrete layers of chapters, featured as ‘A Sisyphean Loop in Contemporary Archival Art’, ‘Repetition’ – ‘Repetition as Accumulation’, ‘Repetition without Origin’, ‘Repetition as Creation’, ‘Failure’ – ‘Performing the Archive’ and ‘Queering the Archive’. Interwoven with diverse cases of archival art practices in each layer, the final map unveils performative and processual multiplicities of Sisyphean archival art. I observed four key points regarding what my mapping of Sisyphean archives has elucidated thus far.

First, mapping the Sisyphean archives is about subverting or reappraising the predominant negativity of repetition and failure itself. There are generalised perceptions of repetition and failure; these assume that the former is regarded as a banal reproduction of identical things without any differentiation, while the latter is often devalued as a mere step on the path to success. The journey of Sisyphean artists demonstrates that repetitive rhythms, activated in and out of archives, are polymorphous to mimicking, invading, and undermining the canon of institutional archives in a bid to go forward with transformative energy that tears down archival idealisation and totalitarianism, rather than repressively going back to the same archival languages and principles, and furthermore, to ceaselessly generate differences as creative logic. Sisyphean archival art resists considering the realm of failure as a mere antipode to the concept of success. It actively promotes the positive quality and potentiality of failure as an expanded critical tool, allowing for more questions than answers and accepting uncertainty,

indeterminacy, and contingency beyond categorisation and regulations. Consequently, the critical capacity of both repetition and failure has been broadened by such unusual and versatile rhythms generated.

Second, mapping the Sisyphean archives is about in-between zones that blur the borders of binary concepts. It is about perpetually exposing paradoxical moments that oscillate between two oppositional poles or double-sided conditions of knowledge production. That is to say, it is about repeatedly failing (or battling) an anchoring to one-sided understanding, similar to the endless task of Sisyphus. The Sisyphean effort does not remain in vain but brings alternative modes of being, thinking, and doing.

Let me recall the types of twilight zones Sisyphean archival art has navigated. The most noticeable one is to disrupt the antithetical relation of “success/failure”. A Sisyphean force neither suggests a certain model of successful archives nor does it make a distinction between the success and failure of archival art production. Rather, it reconfigures archival issues on the unusual premises of abnormality, queerness, delay, errors, and detours, not on the premise of the rigid presentation of symbolic order. To do this, Sisyphean artists exercise the simultaneous yet conflictive performativity of “archival/anarchival” as a potent weapon of critique. The archive is already based on the ambivalent procedure of “selecting/discarding”, “preserving/destroying”, and as a result, “remembering/forgetting.” This process inevitably bears feelings of “compensating/loss” and the “life/death” of being and materials within archives. In addition, the act of archiving itself is always somewhere between “finitude/openness”. Artists intuitively see through this inherent instability and fallibility of the archive, which is sustained by the dialectic of the archival/anarchival impulse and continuously sets out a repetitive pursuit of research, decipherment, and regeneration.

I discerned “external/ internal” rhythms of repetition that are often intertwined or interacted in archival art: the external appearance of listing, displaying, and enumerating as visual patterns and internal agents that deconstruct myths of archival origins and enact archival variability and creativity. The repetitive accumulation of Sisyphean artists reverses the value of “trivial/exceptional” collectibles and of “ordinariness/uniqueness”, blurring the border of what

is “archivable/unarchivable”. Sometimes, their own artistic archives are situated in the liminal state of “stability/precariousness” or “order/disorder” by experimenting with the coexistence of “pathological/reparative” or “self-destructive/regenerative” archival rhythms. For instance, a type of “orderly hoarding” archives by Sisyphean artists engenders eccentric orders within the territory of cultural institutions, which eventually undermines the normative logic and function of institutional archives. Intermingled with “individual/collective” memory and “personal/public” history, the inevitable reliance between archival art and institutions shows self-reflective and self-evidentiary approaches toward critiques that resonate the dependence, vulnerability, and limitedness of each party. Accordingly, in this paradoxical context of archival art that merges with institutions, Hal Foster’s observation of defining the orientation of archival art as “more institutive than destructive” and “more legislative than transgressive” has been revised to “mimetic/subversive”, “institutive/destructive”, and “legislative/transgressive” through practices of Sisyphean archival art.

In terms of archival art based on the plurality of repetitive images, the concepts of “authenticity/reproduction” in photographic archives have been questioned. With increasing scepticism toward evidential indexicality and mnemonic origins in reproducible images, a new archival order has begun to indicate a contemporary memory crisis by displaying the infinite disorder of serial structuring, endless expandability, and non-linear archival sequencing. Within this disordered order, Sisyphean archival art is free from the repressive schema of desiring origin or originality, and often seeks to create a contemporary mnemonic map of confusion, fabrication, and anomie. The current digital media environment accelerates the confluence of “analogue/digital” writings and “materialisation/dematerialisation” in archives. Although this increasing phenomenon of digitisation seems to guarantee unlimited archiving capacity and advanced digital memory, dissolution of “remembrance/oblivion” appears to constantly be intensified. Sisyphean artists sharply comprehend these obsolescent and vulnerable feelings of the digital age by applying transitional, shifting, and hybridised phases of archiving to their works of art.

The archival/anarchival narratives of Sisyphean archives frequently explore the world of “non-fiction/fiction” in a fantastical sense. There is always an interrelated thread between fact and fabrication. Their fictive and fictitious storytelling essentially arises from the idea that any documentary or history believed to be built on facts inevitably contains fictive elements; concurrently, no fictional texts are completely free from historical reality. For many post-structural thinkers and historians, history as “continuity/discontinuity” has been a significant matter of dispute. A solid belief in archival history as an organised composite – one unified story with chronological continuity – has been collapsed. Sisyphean archival storytelling reflects rupturing and halting moments of misunderstanding, misfires, inaccuracies, and the failures of archived stories, and invents its own archival stories without a coherent plot structure in the form of a beginning, middle, and end. Introducing unexpected falsity, arbitrary patterns, and strange combinations, it repetitively creates different narratives within, from, or outside of archives, and actualises latent archival potentials narrating toward the future.

Sisyphean artists also detect ideological, political, and historical discrepancies in “colonising/colonised” history writing. While tracing hegemonic methods and mythical constructions of colonial archives, they disclose false, distorted, and exaggerated origins of colonial memory and history through their artistic storytelling. Simply put, Sisyphean archival art attempts to reveal the haunting ideology of colonisation and fill in the gaps of “grand narratives/peripheral stories”. It repeatedly disturbs the dominant readings of established archives, creates fissures in mythical archives formulated as uniformity and comprehensiveness at a national and imperialistic scale, and excavates unheard, forgotten, and minor stories.

Above all, Sisyphean storytelling never has the same journey. The ambiguous rhythms of “repeating the same/repeating as difference” run throughout this form of storytelling. The factual yet fictitious archival narrative appears to repetitively track down the same marks of their repressed origins from within archived memory, however, its ultimate direction is not set to discover the original location of the repressive past. The imaginative and playful story as infinite expansion dispels the repressive roots from where they had been initiated, freely orchestrates ever-changing living creations, and iteratively navigates through multiple zones of

time, space, and memory. Thus, Sisyphean archival storytelling is also about exploring “tree/rhizome” models. Deleuze and Guattari argue that these two models are not completely opposed to one another, but that one model involves another model within itself. In other words, the models are not dualistic; rather, they give rise to the indeterminacy of two forms of constant “arranging/re-arranging”. The map of storytelling in favour of an emancipated association, awkward references, and dramatic de-familiarisation of things is rhizomatically and kaleidoscopically expanded beyond certain causal links. By perpetually “deconstructing/reconstructing” existing contexts and “arranging/re-arranging” fragmented and heterogeneous things, the archival/anarchival performativity of Sisyphean archival art evolves by itself.

I also highlighted the “appearing/disappearing” Sisyphean archival art in the between zones of archives and performance. These realms appear to be at odds with one another, as archives aim for stable and permanent preservation and performance is based on a one-off presence and liveness. Sisyphean artists’ archival performances on the premise of failure mediate the “materiality/immateriality” of archival residues. The visual dominance of archives is transformed to a sensorial and polyphonic dimension of the site where an invisible and irretraceable area of archives and archiving can appear and reappear over and over again, each time differently. Furthermore, by virtue of staging failure, Sisyphean performing the archive addresses typical images of history and historiography, and experiments with fragmented and discordant remains from the archive via improvisation and unpredictable new relations.

Artists’ participatory approaches and literal performances of the archive reanimates bodily memory and experience in the present moment. Such bodily archives are more inclined to processual moments, often ritualising the repetitive course of the consumption and disappearance of time. Their archival performances boundlessly visit “inside/outside” of archives and take on both the roles of “performer/audience” and “researcher/archivist”. Using this versatile performative platform, Sisyphean archives experiment in order to cultivate concurrent forces of “function/malfunction”, “traces/non-traces”, and the “conservation/destruction” of archival remains, resisting the fossilised and stagnate states of

archives and gradually produce becoming-archives in a constant flux of “doing/undoing”. The obvious failing efforts of Sisyphean performers question how binary oppositions of the “productive/fruitless” process and “goal-oriented/purposeless” labour can be bleached. As an alternative mode of documenting and archiving reality, performing seemingly futile and absurd actions in an iterative manner are not meaningless tasks but rather persistent, speculative, defiant, hopeful, or poetic critiques and creations. The undone, deferred, and detoured form of failure allows for a more provisional and exploratory attitude in order to differently perceive the taken-for-granted world around us.

Queer archival art was another crucial practice for breaking the extreme ends of social norms as “non-queer/queer”. Undermining the social division of “mainstream/marginal” beings, Sisyphean queer artists are more interested in collecting ephemeral materials that mainstream public archives generally ignore or fail to include. Queer archives of ephemera deliver homoerotic and voyeuristic moods that contain idiosyncratic queer feelings and reflect an elusive and fleeting sense of queer identities. Their obsession with secretive and underground collecting contributes to the preservation of other histories existing on the margins that fall outside official histories. A queer performative approach to social and gender “conformity/unconformity” destabilises any confines of unquestioned and naturalised disciplines of gender, sexuality, time, and history in mainstream cultures. Queer archives have more flexible criteria of “inclusion/exclusion” and keep pulling out hidden stories from the archival shelves, or even from not yet recognised or scattered records. In particular, the queer alternative construction of lineage and communality is enabled by the active archival process of migrating, travelling, collaborating, networking, and re-editing across multiple borders of time and place. Queer wandering and inventing its own past and comrades are sometimes imagined in the fictional world, where queer marginal subjectivity, histories, and feelings are unfolded in a more radical and emancipatory way. Queer narratives never stop navigating unknown, uncategorised, and unregulated territories and resist the permanent decision of “settling down/moving forward”. Constant queer “questioning/answering” regarding multiple modes of

being, time, and space produce counter-archives of “finding/getting lost” in favour of ephemerality, temporality, elusiveness, and indeterminacy.

Third, mapping the Sisyphean archives is about tolerance, emancipation, and coexistence beyond such dichotomous borders. Through multifaceted directions and expansions of Sisyphean archival art, a concrete totality of the archive as a regulatory system and a privileged political power has ruptured, and the archival objectivity and continuity that secure the evidentiary and stable status of historical records have been called into question. Dismantling any prescriptive and stereotypical patterns of symbolic order, as well as socially neutralised and normalised ideas inscribed in archives, Sisyphean archives pay more attention to trivia, wastes, margins, and deviance and respect differences, uncertainty, and spontaneity being infiltrated into archives. Thus, Sisyphean artists facilitate an offbeat route or sideway for reading existing archives and archiving, among which emancipatory trajectories embrace a much broader scope of being, thinking, knowing, and doing. They seek a multitude of possibilities rather than a finitude of certainties, with a more emphatic imagination and a more tolerant attitude for possible changes and contingencies for the future. Sisyphean archival art prefers to create collaborative and affective connections and to have dialogues with all types of archives across time and space, thereby being participatory, permissive, inclusive, and transformative. These accessible, sharable, and connectable characteristics of Sisyphean archival art provide reparative grounds for ignored voices, lost and wounded memories, and marginal narratives to be repeatedly brought to the surface.

Fourth, mapping the Sisyphean archives is about differences, otherness, heterogeneity, and multiplicity, as well as creation moving towards the future. I presented numerous examples of artists who interrupt monolithic and totalitarian views, overdetermined social consensus, and ideological certainties embedded within archives. Sisyphean artists face the fatalistic recognition that there are unavoidable discrepancies between the memory of the past and the present perception of or access to it; thus, their interpretations are not bound to repeat the same statements, but to bear irregularity, heterogeneous fragments, and differences in flux. Their Sisyphean archives seek a boundless expansion of the narratives travelling across a multitude of

times and beings, refraining from a nostalgic reduction to the past and the singular world of the present being. In other words, they do not remain only nostalgic, mystifying, and commemorative, but serve to create differences, variations, and alterations. This artistic process echoes perpetual dialogues between a Derridean sense of oppositions and deconstruction and a Deleuzian sense of difference, creation, and reconstruction in terms of formulating identity and rupturing grand narratives. Sisyphean artists not only corrupt the existing reality with their practices, but also use factual, fragmented cases from the past to inscribe creative impulses for new trajectories, thereby highlighting how narratives are formed in the first place and subsequently, how other heterogeneous incidents become linked together. For them, the anarchival impulse is not only an essential impetus for the subversive destruction but also a precondition for the next steps of archival creation and generation. The archival/anarchival performativity of Sisyphean archives negates the negativity of death, disappearance, oblivion, chaos, and decay, and embraces more generative possibilities as the emergence of the new, new beginnings and connectivity.

Such performativity can also serve an important function in the personal life of an individual, because it can provide us with more choices about how we live and what kind of narratives we live by. Although the ordinary stories of and particular voices within communities influence the formation of larger cultural narratives and collective memory, we incessantly witness emerging gaps of how such bigger narratives correspond to or differ between private and public levels. Therefore, it is necessary for individual and communal consciousness to doubt homogeneity, embrace otherness, and perform differences to enable the multiple potentials yet to arise within all grand archives and knowledge production systems. In this sense, each layer of all the chapters I investigated thus far still requires endless reconfiguration, modification, and expansion for further stories to be mapped and re-mapped. My mapping of Sisyphean archives has only begun, with another journey aimed at creating a new map now ready to start all over again.

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